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MEMOIR OF KENELM HENRY DIGBY

MEMOIR

OF

KENELM HENRY DIGBY

BY

BERNARD HOLLAND, C.B.

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IN MEMORY OF HER FATHER
TO MARY
THE HONBLE. MRS. HUBERT DORMER

PREFACE

Kenelm Digby took no part in public affairs; his history is that of his writings and private life. My motive in composing the present Memoir, with the approval of his descendants, is to direct the attention of, at least, a few readers, to the never well-known, and now almost forgotten works of this Author, to whom I myself owe so much that my own labour is payment of a debt of gratitude. A record of his life is, I think, the easiest and pleasantest method of so doing.

I must warn readers who expect to find in a Memoir a number of letters written by its subject, that in this case they will hardly find one. Most letters written by men in private life who died, like Digby, near forty years ago have been lost or destroyed, or are put away in unreachable places, and it seems to be so in his case; at any rate I have not been able to discover any. It matters little, I think, because Kenelm Digby infused into his works a large amount of autobiography. One can reconstruct from them his childhood, and boyhood, and University days, and friendships, and the joys and sorrows of his family life. But as all this is scattered through nearly forty volumes of his books—most of them

not easily obtained now—it was necessary to bring the events together in a consecutive way.

The events of private life, when mirrored in a reflective mind, and felt by a feeling heart, and expressed by one who has the gift of expression, have, in narrative, this advantage over events in political, or other active life, that they turn on matters not transient, like those on the public stage, but at all times intimately interesting. For this reason a book like the *Récit d'une Sœur* will outlive masses of biography of once seemingly important men of action.

Catholic readers, not already acquainted with Kenelm Digby, may be especially glad to be introduced to him, but his writings ought to give pleasure to many not yet included within the bounds of the Central Church of Christendom.

BERNARD HOLLAND.

HARBLEDOWN,
NEAR CANTERBURY,
March, 1919.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	vii
I.	DESCENT; BOYHOOD; CAMBRIDGE	1
II.	TRAVELS	18
III.	CONVERSION TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH	34
IV.	"THE BROADSTONE OF HONOUR"	59
V.	ENGLISH AND FRENCH SOCIETY	81
VI.	"MORES CATHOLICI"	94
VII.	"COMPITUM"	122
VIII.	FAMILY LIFE	133
IX.	FAMILY LIFE—*continued*	162
X.	LATEST WRITINGS	197
XI.	CLOSE OF LIFE	235

CHAPTER I

DESCENT, BOYHOOD AND CAMBRIDGE

"CHIVALRY is only a name for that general spirit or state of mind which disposes men to heroic and generous actions, and keeps them conversant with all that is beautiful and sublime in the intellectual and moral world. It will be found that, in the absence of conservative principles, this spirit more generally prevails in youth than in the later periods of men's lives; and, as the heroic is always the earliest age in the history of nations, so youth, the first period of human life, may be considered as the heroic or chivalrous age of each separate man; and there are few so unhappy as to have grown up without having experienced its influence, and having derived the advantage of being able to enrich their imaginations and to soothe their hour of sorrow with its romantic recollections."

KENELM DIGBY, *Broadstone of Honour*, "*Godefridus.*"

THE Digbys, whose very name has a fascination, were a true old English race, and what, in the way of races, is better than that?[1] They descended from one Aelmer, who in the reign of Edward the Confessor held land at Tilton in the County of Leicester, in the heart of England. Some of them are said to have gone crusading. Everard Digby, High Sheriff of Rutland, was slain at Towton Field in 1461, fighting on the defeated and more romantic Lancastrian side. From one of his sons descended Sir Everard Digby, who was executed in 1606 at the age of twenty-four, for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot. A son of this Sir Everard was the Sir Kenelm Digby

[1] There is a village called Digby in Lincolnshire, which may have been the first origin of the name.

of the seventeenth century, the multifarious writer and natural philosopher, and man of society and action, the assailant of the Venetian fleet at Scanderoon, a Catholic and courtier of Charles I., yet a personal friend of Oliver Cromwell, and, daring man, the husband of Venetia Stanley, that "woman of an extraordinary beauty, and as extraordinary fame," Lord Clarendon diplomatically says. A poet called him :

> "The Age's wonder for his noble parts,
> Skilled in six tongues, and learned in all the Arts."

"His person," says a contemporary, "was handsome and gigantic, and nothing was wanting to make him a complete Chevalier."

The Kenelm Henry Digby who is the subject of this Memoir did not, however, descend from this hero, but in a distinct line from their nearest common ancestor, the Everard Digby who fought and died for the Red Rose at Towton. One son of this Everard was Sir Simon Digby of Coleshill, in the County of Warwick, who, still on the Red Rose side, fought, with six brothers, for Henry of Richmond against Richard III. at Bosworth in 1485, and was well rewarded by the winner. His great-great-grandson was Sir Robert Digby of Coleshill, who, in 1600, married Lettice, (afterwards) Baroness Offaley, heiress of the great Norman-Irish race of Fitzgeralds, Earls of Kildare. After his death she was besieged in her castle by Irish rebels of 1642. Kenelm Digby thus speaks of her in his *Broadstone of Honour* :

"Equally memorable was the conduct of that excellent Lady Offalia, from whom those of my house boast their descent, bearing the arms of her family, a field argent, a saltire gules, quarterly upon their paternal Coat. This noble woman was besieged in her castle of Geashill, in

the King's County, Ireland, by an army of those faithful and injured men whom intolerance and injustice had driven to insurrection. Her reply, upon their summons to surrender, evinced a noble spirit, and, at the same time, a degree of affection for the Irish army opposed to her which, although rare in persons who were engaged against them, became nevertheless a feature in the character of her posterity. She appeals to them as to her having been always a good neighbour amongst them, never having done any wrong to any of them, declares her resolution to live and die innocently, and to defend her own, leaving the issue to God; 'and though,' she concludes, 'I have been, and still am, desirous to avoid the shedding of Christian blood, yet, being provoked, your threats shall no whit dismay me. Lettice Offalia.' "

John Digby, a distinguished diplomat, younger brother of the last-mentioned Sir Robert Digby, was created Earl of Bristol in 1622, and his son, then Lord Digby and afterwards second Earl of Bristol, who became a Catholic, was the Cavalier leader famous in the Civil War. This line of Digbys died out in 1698, but not so the elder, and now Irish, line.

Robert, eldest son of Sir Robert Digby by his wife Lettice, Baroness Offaley, was, in 1620, created Baron Digby of Geashill in the Irish Peerage, and from his eldest son descended the existing Barons Digby of Sherborne, and also from the fifth Lord Digby a numerous cadet progeny. Sir Robert Digby and Lettice had also a younger son named Essex Digby, who became Bishop of Dromore. The eldest son of this bishop, named Simon Digby, in his turn became Bishop of Elphin, and died in 1720. The Bishop of Elphin was Jacobite in his sympathies. He saw James II. at dawn, after the battle of the Boyne, riding south, his hat slouched for

concealment, and visited him later at St. Germain in France, when poor James said to the Bishop that if, as he trusted, what he had suffered had benefited his soul, then even William of Orange would have proved his best friend.

It was a strongly clerical family. Four daughters of the Bishop of Elphin married Irish clergymen, and two of his sons were ordained. The eldest son of Simon Digby, Bishop of Elphin, was John Digby of Landestown, the grandfather of Kenelm. He was member for Kildare in the Irish House of Commons. One merry night he was the only member, it is said, of that most festive of legislative assemblies who was not intoxicated, and on the next day, as he was known never to drink, his fellow-members and the officials came flocking to his house to find out what business they had done the night before.

The Landestown estate descended to Simon Digby, the eldest son of this John. The second surviving son of John Digby, M.P., was William, who became Dean of Clonfert and Rector of Geashill, in King's County.

The Dean of Clonfert was a man of uncommonly all-round talent. In his youth he was a great athlete, skater, runner and jumper. At Lord Digby's place, Sherborne in Dorset, he made a leap which was marked and long exhibited as a great feat. He had a passion for painting, also for carpentering and mechanics and landscape-gardening. He was a Hebrew scholar, and wrote lectures and treatises. He had travelled in Spain and France, and in the latter land, his son hints, had a mysterious love-affair.

> "He seemed a kind of lord on his domain,
> Where peace for great and small alike would reign." [1]

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto II.

He was a man "supremely just," and thereby, in Ireland, made "open and embittered foes." The boy Kenelm loved his sire.

> "Ah! with what love he saw that figure tall
> Pacing so thoughtful from their lofty Hall,
> To wander in his groves so bowed the while:
> As if he felt that in a little while
> He must leave all things that on earth were dear,
> Though till his last month none for him would fear.
> Ah! with what grief he left those walks and lawns
> Where first he ran as life's sweet morning dawns." [1]

Evidently Kenelm Digby derived much from this striking and original father: his love of nature, painting, riding, swimming, travelling, and his talent, rather discursive than concentrated.

William Digby, Dean of Clonfert, married thrice. His first wife was Mary Anne Butler, by whom he had children who all died young; his second was his cousin, Mary Digby, by whom he had three sons; his third was a widow named Mary Wood.

She was of "lovely face," her son says, and of Devonshire race, but also related in blood to the Anglo-Irish family of Edgworth. Her great pride was to be of kin to the Abbé Edgworth, who attended Louis XVI. on the scaffold, and her treasure was his rosary enshrined in a shell. She died soon after her husband, and was so much loved that a multitude came from all the country round to follow her funeral procession. Says her son:

> "Oh! verdant Isle, that still so honours death,
> Love thee I will, and to my latest breath." [2]

By Mary the Dean of Clonfert had two sons, the elder Richard by name, and the younger Kenelm Henry, who was born in the last year or two of the eighteenth

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto II. [2] *Idem.*

century, and is the subject of this Memoir.[1] Kenelm was born when his father was between sixty and seventy and was still a boy when he died in 1812 aged near eighty. Since Kenelm, the son of so old a father, was tall and very strong and hardy, and himself passed the age of eighty, the vital force in the race must have been great.

Richard Digby, Kenelm's eldest whole brother, died in 1820. He left his inheritance to Kenelm, who in this way, and by the fact that his wife had property, had a good income, enough to live upon for life without entering a paid profession, or having to earn a livelihood by his pen. It is an advantage of established property and "unearned income" that it allows some men to pursue unremunerative occupations which are beneficial to their fellow-beings. When Socialism has been fully established, and we are all Government employés, no one will have time to write a book like *Mores Catholici*.

Kenelm spent a happy childhood at his father's rectory of Geashill, with its distant prospect of the purple, heathy, hill-range of Slieve-bloom, in the very centre of Ireland, playing by himself at imaginative games, or with rustic lads, reading poetry, Shakespeare and, above all, Walter Scott, roaming through woods and meadows, climbing about the ruins of Geashill Castle, which his ancestress had so valiantly defended. Sometimes he was at Lord Charlesville's castle, seven miles away, where a charming child of

[1] The parish register at Geashill was carelessly kept, and has no baptismal entries between 1784 and 1801. According to Mr. Rouse Ball's *Admissions to Trinity College, Cambridge*, vol. iv., Kenelm Digby, at the age of eighteen, matriculated in 1815. This would make the year of his birth to be 1797. But according to the obituary notice in the *Times* he was eighty when he died, and thus born in 1799 or 1800. Probably the date 1797 is the correct one.

the house seemed to him a "vision in the sky" so beautiful she was, and gentle. This was Catharine Tisdall, a daughter of Lady Charlesville by a former marriage, who afterwards married Colonel George Marlay, and became the mother of Lady John Manners. She was an intimate friend of Kenelm Digby's later years in London. Kenelm learned to ride from an English groom named Jones, to whom he was much attached.

Kenelm Digby never seems to have visited Ireland again, after he left it while still a boy, except once, to attend his mother's funeral; at least there is no record of his having done so, for he never cared to go anywhere except to the Continent; but he cherished its memories, and in his writings always praised the Irish race.

> "Island of Saints, still constant, still allied
> To the great truths opposed to human pride;
> Island of ruins, towers, cloisters grey,
> Whence palmer kings with pontiffs once did stray
> To Rome and Sion, or to kindle fire
> Which amidst later darkness can inspire
> Lands that in fondest memory and song
> Thy pristine glory fearlessly prolong;
> Thy peaceful image floating in the West
> Denotes a Cause to yield all spirits rest;
> Ancient, yet never past, as years gone by,
> But rising gloriously in eastern sky,
> As oft as finding in the setting light
> A symbol of thy grandeur in that night
> Of ages, when thy fame from sea to sea
> Extended as a blissful mystery.
> For grandeur, nations, kingdoms have their day,
> But Faith like thine will never pass away." [1]

After a time Kenelm was sent to school in England, with his brother, at Petersham near Richmond. Here his great sport was rowing on the Thames. He carried

[1] Digby's *Short Poems*, 1866, p. 82.

this art to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he arrived in the year of the battle of Waterloo. The "tubs that then did serve for boats, on which the drowsy Fen-man floats" were far inferior to the craft of the Thames. He, and some equally enlightened friends, assisting the enterprise with money aid, induced the boat-keeper at the locks to construct "some boats at which the Fen would stare." In his poem of memories, written when he was over seventy, Kenelm proceeds to say:

"In brief, before they left the place
The University could trace
The good effects of their renown
That followed them from London down,
Until their eight-oared races proved
A school for art they long had loved;
And then, observe, to him was given
The task of pulling number seven
In Trinity's first famous boat,
As, sooth, already someone wrote.
For never, and the fact he'll swear,
Was it with him once beaten there.
Founder of boating on the Cam,
By memory taught, he'll say, I am." [1]

A monument should be erected to Kenelm Digby on the banks of Cam.

He and his friends often rowed down by the Cam and then the Ouse, dull, muddy streams, into the fens, and, though at first he had found those regions "dreary" after the Thames valley, he came to discover "great beauty in that level ground" above which long flights of geese, or now and then wild swans, would cleave their mysterious way. Once he and his crew rowed their eight-oar all the way down the Cam and the Ouse to the sea, crossed the Wash, and went up the river through the marsh levels to Boston. Even a primitive heavy

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto III.

eight-oar could hardly cross the Wash except on the calmest days, and the crew had to return to Wisbeach walking, while their boat travelled on a cart. In crossing the Wash they saw seals lying on banks of sand. Do seals ever visit these sandbanks now ?

Like Don Quixote, Kenelm Digby once challenged a lion. A travelling show came to Cambridge. He entered the cage of a lion named Nero and sat on his back. Nero revolved on him an " awful eye," but did no more. Afterwards, in a northern town, poor Nero, weary of the tricks of men, slew a professional lion-taming damsel, and was shot for the crime.

Kenelm Digby did not altogether neglect the dry schools of Cambridge, though he could only just acquire the tincture of mathematics necessary for a degree. He took his B.A. degree in 1819. In the year 1820 he won the Norrisian prize essay, and as by rule this had to be printed, he for the first time had the rapture to see himself a book. There is no book like one's first book. It was " respectfully dedicated to the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, Master of Trinity." The subject was the " Evidences of the Christian Religion." The essay was not very closely reasoned, but showed, in its quotations, a range of reading very remarkable in one so young. Romilly, the Trinity lecturer, praised Digby for a " metaphysic turn." But Kenelm's great study now was that of books of chivalry and mediaeval history, towards which his first bent had been given by the heroic poems of Walter Scott. As an undergraduate he resolved to be a knight, and getting into King's College Chapel at nightfall, kept his vigil there till dawn. He had a design to keep a night's vigil in Ely Cathedral also. He had a friend of like humour, George Darby,

and at Marklye in Sussex they held a solemn tournament, with ponies for steeds and hop-poles for spears. In imitation of the bold Deloraine they rode one night to Hurstmonceaux Castle, and touched its walls with their lances. One day, as Kenelm was riding by himself, he had a knightly adventure. A pretty damsel of seventeen came down a side lane and said that she had been molested by a felon. Would he let her walk by the side of his horse, and protect her, into Hastings? In a vacation ramble in the Tyrol he swam by moonlight, in hope of adventure, across a lake to a huge old castle called Sigismundsburg, standing on an island, but found nought but ruins, and heard nothing but owls. On an earlier journey he first saw the castle of Ehrenbreitstein, opposite Coblentz, on the Rhine, and conceived the title of his book, the *Broadstone of Honour*.

Kenelm Digby was a chivalric figure, almost seeming born out of his right period of history into the nineteenth century. He was over six feet in height, strongly built, with dark hair and eyes, a fine forehead. Edward Fitzgerald, in his beautiful Platonic dialogue *Euphranor*, of which the scene is laid at Cambridge, thus speaks of him. Something was said of the *Broadstone of Honour*:

"And then Euphranor ask'd me 'Did I not remember Digby himself at College— perhaps know him?'

"'Not *that*,' I answered, 'but remembered him very well. A grand, swarthy fellow, who might have stept out of the canvas of some knightly portrait in his Father's house— perhaps the living image of one sleeping under some cross-legg'd Effigies in the Church.'" And in the same dialogue the young Alfred Tennyson is called "A man at all points, Euphranor,—like your Digby—

of grand proportion and figure, becoming his ancient and honourable race."

Edward Fitzgerald went up to Trinity in October, 1826, and so saw Digby when he was still often at Cambridge, and twenty-eight to thirty years old, or thereabouts, in the prime of young-knightly vigour. Fitzgerald's testimony is worth anything. What a pity that Digby was not one of his friends and correspondents in later life! If so, Digby's memory would have been embalmed in that imperishable record of the Cambridge élite of near a hundred years ago.

During the years when Kenelm Digby was an undergraduate, and those after he had taken a degree and still made Cambridge his English headquarters, there was at Trinity a remarkable set both of dons and undergraduates. The College has never, perhaps, had a more massively intellectual high table. Wordsworth, the brother of the poet, was Master. Among the younger tutors or lecturers, men a few years older than Digby, were Julius Hare, tutor and classical lecturer at Trinity from 1822 to 1832;[1] William Whewell, who was son of a Lancaster master-carpenter, and became successor to Wordsworth as Master of Trinity; Adam Sedgwick, the hearty Yorkshireman and ardent geologist; Thirlwall, man of immense learning, knowing many languages, the historian and subsequent Bishop of St. David's; Joseph Romilly, the Registrar of the University; Hugh Rose, an early High Churchman, and George Peacock. The most stirring and vivacious of these active minds was, perhaps, that of Julius Hare, and Kenelm Digby well knew him in those rooms in the gateway tower of the New Court which look down the "long walk of limes."

[1] Julius Hare was born 1795, Whewell 1794, Sedgwick 1785.

The undergraduates of Trinity were also, some of them, remarkable. The brilliant Etonian, Winthrop Mackworth Praed, whom Digby knew well, and T. B. Macaulay, afterwards the historian, both came to Trinity in 1818. Richard Chenevix Trench, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin and poet, went up in 1825, Frederick Maurice in 1823, John Sterling in 1824, Edward Fitzgerald in 1826, Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Hallam in 1828, all younger men than Kenelm Digby; but they may have met him or known him by sight when, for some ten years after his degree, he was staying a good deal at Cambridge and reading in the Libraries; and they certainly read, and were much influenced by his *Broadstone of Honour*, published first just before they came to Cambridge, and re-published while they were there. It had much to do with the "Young England" movement, which was, mainly, a romantic young Cambridge enterprise, and with Tennyson's early poetry.

Digby had a special admiration for Whewell. Many years later, Aubrey de Vere, in a letter to the lady who wrote a Memoir of Dr. Whewell, said:

"The friendship of Whewell and Kenelm Digby is a thing the more remarkable when one remembers the different characters of the two intellects. But then both these men had in common that greatest of all gifts (greater than any degree of genius), a great heart; and that, doubtless, was the source of their mutual sympathy."

Digby himself, writing to Aubrey de Vere after Whewell's death in 1866, said:

"I had reason to regard Whewell as one of the most generous, open-hearted, disinterested and noble-minded

men that I ever knew. I remember circumstances that called for the exercise of each of these rare qualities, when they were met in a way that would now seem incredible, so fast does the world seem moving from all ancient standards of goodness and moral grandeur."

To the same lady, Mrs. Stair Douglas, who wrote the Memoir of Dr. Whewell, Digby wrote this letter in 1873, from Kensington :

" You will easily understand that though my acquaintance with Dr. Whewell began very early at Cambridge, it is chiefly of his genial and generous disposition as a friend and companion that I can speak. This anyone could observe who knew him as intimately as I did. Though on my first coming up to College, he consented to have me as a pupil, I can only venture to say of him, as a tutor, that he was always encouraging and indulgent, possessing a singular faculty for reconciling those whom he instructed to subjects of study for which they would otherwise have felt no inclination.

" Having formed one of a party of Trinity men who spent a Long Vacation with him in North Wales for the sake of study, at the expiration of the time he refused to take any remuneration from me, saying that he would not be justified in doing so, as I had not paid any attention to his lectures. In fact, I liked him better on horseback than in the professional chair, and he was always, during the intervals of study, scouring the hills with some of us. On one occasion, having walked with him from Aber-Menai to the coast of Anglesea, opposite Carnarvon, we expected to find the ferry boat ready to take us across, but, on the contrary, it being very late in the evening, the boat was moored out a hundred feet or more from shore, the ferryman having retired for the night into a little hut. On his refusing to turn out to take us across, we asked if he would let us take the boat, if we could get into it. On his assenting, Whewell was the first to dash into the stream and swim

to the boat. We drew up the anchor and effected the passage safely, while the ferryman raged on the shore and called us all manner of names.

"The year that he went with me to Normandy, visiting all the cathedrals and abbeys, he drew up a table on which you saw at a glance the distinguishing features of the different orders or epochs of Gothic architecture—the Norman, the Early English, the Decorated and the Perpendicular. As a travelling companion he was unrivalled, being always ready to rough it, and take everything in a good-humoured way, and I shall not easily forget his riding with me on the post-horses to visit St. Michel au peril de la mer.

"During a long friendship I never remember hearing him speak unkindly of anyone behind his back, though he was free enough and bold enough spoken when he had you face to face. He was wonderfully fond of his friends, whom he never forgot. I remember his having made one of them sit for his picture to Lonsdale, and then his having given the portrait which he paid for to a third party, a mutual friend. But it would be endless to tell instances of his generous spirit. And, in fact, it was that no doubt which gained him the friendship of so many who were incompetent to profit by his extraordinary mental powers. He conciliated all but proud, self-conceited people, who did not like to be put down by a word or two from him."

Whewell, says Digby elsewhere, taught him at Cambridge "to distinguish the true bounds of reason."

Kenelm Digby loved Cambridge, all the more so, perhaps, since no part of his patriotism had been deflected into that of a great public school, and to the end of his life he liked to summon up these memories. In one of the carelessly-written poems of his old age, *Ouranogaia*, he thus describes this long-vanished society which passed

cheerfully at this time through those old courts and streets and gardens :

" O Cambridge, Alma Mater ! who but thou
Shouldst add an instance from experience now ?
While Friendship on this earth can still remain,
Turning to thee our search will not be vain.
For nature unsophisticated stays
With thee to sweeten all thy daily ways.
Thy sons are seldom stiffen'd into stone :
With thee no formal contradiction grown :
For no false, gloomy guides, as elsewhere, try
To pass off pride for truth, and manners high ;
And vessels out at sea are safe far more
Than those, steer'd wrong, left stranded on the shore.
Ah ! suffer me of some to tell and sing
Whose kindness in times past now aids my wing,

Thorpe was exact, enthusiastic Hare ;
Solid was Rose, and Sedgwick past compare,
For honest spirit and for noble mind,
The type of manhood, brave, and frank, and kind.
Hare, shall I only name him in my song ?
Right's fearless champion, pulverizing Wrong,
In depth a Plato, for the weakest mild,
A guide with Sages, and with youths a child—
Hare was a joy you thought could never end,
A light for judgments, and for hearts a friend.
Wordsworth was learned, timid, for delay,
Though conscious life was speeding fast away ;
Well skill'd on any course the prize to win,
Yet still regretting he could not begin.
Valpy was curious, critical, though shy,
In mien still lowly, while his heart was high.
A classic fancy was to Shadwell given,
To Whewell all the knowledge under Heav'n.
Famed or obscure, name them altogether—
Master or student differ'd not a feather :
For Whewell had the virtues of a boy,
Though mental strength did oft the proud annoy ;
And Romilly's or Peacock's smile would seem
E'en to their pupils like true Friendship's dream.

Grave Porter would leave fluxions for his friend ;
And Bagshaw's love with life would only end.
Oh ! that I could portray in worthy strain
Worsley's bright fancy, and the sense of Bayne,
Elmslie, who Fielding's very spirit owns,
So tuned to echo all its sweetest tones.
Aristophanic Barnes so skill'd to show
How Grecian wit in English verse should flow ;
Or Sidney Walker, whom Miltonian prose
Employ'd translating till his life's swift close,
Timid, distrustful, all whose doubts had grown
From mental sickness, as his friends would own.
Kemble's good-nature, Churchill's pluck and fire,
Than Talbot's Science some would more admire.
Then Darby was the model of a knight ;
Whatever Glennie said was always right ;
Flamank from Eton was a swimmer bold,
For whom the Cam in winter was not cold ;
With whom the three years I did breast its flow,
When ice would float and wild white tempests blow,
When fields were flooded (which delighted more),
And yellow torrents mined each green Isle's shore ;
Ah ! Friendship midst the willows then was warm,
While braving icebergs, sleet, or rain, or storm.
Poor Hastings ! an Adonis in his youth,
Aye practised goodness, piety and truth ;
Mansel had pluck'd all flow'rets that e'er grew
In English letters to present to you ;
Sage Kindersley would play each gentle part ;
And Kingdon brought you sunshine in his heart ;
Shaw, that from Westminster at first had flown,
Had guileless speech pure Innocence might own ;
And Murray, pensive, skill'd on the guitar,
Beyond the earth in mind would wander far ;
Bayley was gentle, even while afloat
And ruling eight men in our far-famed boat,
Of whom two, Blane and Mayo, proved to be
Heroes in war, renown'd for chivalry.
Phillips, deep-read in mediaeval books,
Had Heav'n around him, Heav'n in his looks ;
Praed could find merit, be it e'er so low,
And e'en on Digby some kind lines bestow ;
Spencer—my hand too coarse should fear to paint
The English noble, and the Christian saint—

There was not one whose presence did not bring
For dulness Fairyland, for Heav'n a wing." [1]

A bundle of old Cambridge letters addressed to Digby show that he was dear to his friends. One writes, "No one is more capable of giving or receiving pleasure than you are." He was invited to become a member of the Cambridge Conversazione Society, usually known as the "Cambridge Apostles," to which so many men of distinction have belonged during the last hundred years, but he seems to have declined the invitation.

[1] *Ouranogaia*, Canto IX.

CHAPTER II

TRAVELS

"THUS to the Catholic Church is every thoughtful traveller directed by the spectacle of the most lovely spots of the world: for the sublimest scenes produced by nature or by art, instead of chaining his soul to earth, impel it to rise upward to the eternal beauty ever ancient and ever new, to which all that the Catholic religion ordains is but a passage and a preparation."

KENELM DIGBY, *Compitum.*

THE young Kenelm Digby was a pilgrim of romance. In his childhood in Ireland, he says, his imagination played in this way:

> "All things were magnified to youth
> Far grander than they were in truth,
> Each pond was then a spacious lake;
> Each copse for forests you would take.
> Childhood had Alps before its eyes,
> Yea, and the bright Italian skies
> In the least line of distant blue
> That ever came before its view,
> Or in the pale and transient gleam
> Which made it of Ausonia dream."[1]

He delayed not long to convert his childish dreams into those realities which themselves, in memory, so much resemble dreams. Indeed the old traveller must sometimes ask himself what is the difference between, for instance, the Rome or Venice one saw twenty years ago with one's eyes, and the Rome or Venice one has seen in pictures?

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto IV.

While he was an undergraduate at Cambridge, and during some years afterwards while he still made Cambridge his headquarters, Kenelm used to spend short vacations in rambles over England, on horse or foot, often also visiting the house of Lord Digby, Chief of his Clan, at beautiful Sherborne in Dorsetshire. During long vacations he roved the Continent, sketching, and writing notes of travel. He traversed most of Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, only avoiding the Puritan North, the Scandinavian lands, Prussia and "cold" Berlin. He wished to see nothing of what he calls the "soul-sick Prussian nation." In more southern Germany he was moved by what, he says, Madame de Stael rightly called "a certain sweetness in the voice of German women," and he loved the old feudal castles and forests, and the storied and romantic Rhine and Danube.

Here are some of the recollections of youthful travel contained in the poem of his old age, the *Temple of Memory*. This book, undeservedly, is known to so very few that I need not apologize for quoting from it at length.

"In memory the Danube, Rhine,
Between their castled heights will shine,
There, in the silence of the dawn
To sweet Montpellier he is drawn;
He sits beneath the Château d'eau,
And marks the rising beams that glow,
The Pont du Gard, or Nîmes is here,
The Pope's old Palace will appear,
The broad blue waters of the Rhone
Reflecting not the sky's pink tone.
Then to Vaucluse with rocks so high
He hastes, and hears poor Petrarch's sigh.
The Isle-Barbe with its ruins fair,
Lyons, still pious, will be there.
Again these scenes are here that seem

Too bright for aught except a dream,
Such is that rich Aosta's vale,
So shaded with the olive pale,
Unnumbered palaces in sight
Made golden by the morning light,
The Campanile, graceful, tall,
Rough roseate crags that crown them all.
Or he sees Garda's clear, blue lake,
When o'er it the pale dawn will break,
The little coves, the tawny ground,
Olives the only green thing found,
While azure faint, or deep around
The tone prevailing all is found." [1]

Like Byron, who swam the Hellespont, Digby always dwells with affectionate complacency upon his own daring feats as a swimmer, from the time he used to bathe even on bitter ice-breaking days in the Cam. Here he says :

" Then, as a swimmer rather famed,
Again Geneva must be named.
Two sites for bathing you see here
To him incomparably dear,
To whom the Danube, Elbe, and Rhine
Were known to yield such swimming fine
As did at Cette of perfumed air
The blue Mediterranean there.
The first is formèd by two rocks
Which meet the azure billow's shocks,
Rising together near the town,
From which you can plunge headlong down
To ultramarine depths so clear
That sapphires will the ground appear ;
And he remembers well the day
When dark dull clouds above them lay,
That, having dived, when he would rise
What he thought sky did much surprise,
To see the blue then overhead
Become so clear since he was sped,
Until, emerging from the wave,
He found all dark, and dull, and grave,

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto IV.

Just as he'd left it—azure so
Reigning but in the depth below.
The second site is where the Rhone
Has issued from the lake, and grown
So rapid that no diver's might
Can touch the bottom, though in sight.
There by a wooded strip of land
With no return at your command
However skilled, and bold, and strong
You're wafted like a dart along
Until you reach the snow-fed line
Of waters where the Arve will shine,
Where between heat and cold you steer,
The most courageous feeling fear." [1]

Perhaps these careless lines may serve as a guide to some bold young English swimmer of to-day, who would like to try the same sensations. And do they not make the old long to be young again, if it were but for one summer week? Digby plunged into the formidable Rhine near Drachenfels, and was carried three miles down-stream before he could reach the opposite shore. Does man ever feel more man than when his life depends on his swimming in dangerous places? At Rome he swam down the Tiber, and the peasants on the bank, looking down on this strange sight, called him a water-rat. His love of swimming was hereditary, for one of his race, an Everard Digby of the sixteenth century (not the Sir Everard executed in connection with the Gunpowder Plot), had written an early treatise on that noble art.

Here, too, are lines enshrining some memories of Italy on one of these Long Vacation rambles:

"Then too, though on no purpose bent,
To Italy he ravished went,
To Italy as in a dream
Lit with Hyperion's brightest gleam.
There Venice saw him dream or rave

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto IV.

When first he saw her glassy wave,
Or climb to that proud lofty tower
To look down at the evening hour
Upon those roseate purple isles
Stretching so far and bright for miles,
Along the Adriatic there,
Reflecting that illumined air.
Then of Ravenna's silence he
As if a worshipper would be,
Theodoric's vast tomb he saw,
And ancient palaces with awe.
But what deprived him of his breath
Was to see Classe laid in death ;
He knew its woods of pine would prove
A haunt for those who Dryden love,
Byron, and Ariosto too
Whose genius there all poets woo ;
But, what he never dreamt, he found
That vast Basilica still sound,
With its huge tower all alone,
Around which spirits seem to moan.
Then, need he add, to Rome he went,
Though hardly as a pilgrim bent ;
There, passing in the street, he'd see
The Pope, and down he went with glee,
Received his blessing like the rest
And felt that kneeling is the best." [1]

" Ausonia's shores," he says elsewhere, " how can any traveller pass you without being guided rightly on his more important voyage ? O earth how like to heaven ! Raise thine eyes then with Henry Suso, and see with him the country of the celestial Paradise, to which these churches, convents, and calvaries are directing thee."

At Rome he specially loved to see the rising sun stream on the portals of the great church of St. John, or the ancient Benedictine convent on the side of the valley at Subiaco, or the view from Tivoli of " the distant rising majesty of great St. Peter's matchless

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto IV.

pile" while the setting sun coloured all the plain with deep, ruddy hues. And here is a passage in the volume of *Mores Catholici* which appeared in 1833 : [1]

"With the solemn magnificence of the gothic cathedral most of the northern nations are familiar, but religion knew how to adapt her architecture to the locality and the climate. There is sanctity and faith, and the deep thoughts of a revering spirit in the mysterious piles of York and Canterbury, but there is something of the beauty of Paradise at those eastern steps of St. John Lateran, when the morning sun gilds the blue distant hills of Tusculum. To form an adequate idea of that perfect loveliness which is derived from the union of noble edifices with the delightful aspect of nature, one must see the dome and church of the Vatican, rising in the midst of gardens with the mountains beyond, from the groves of the Villa Doria Pamphili, or from the bowers of St. Onofrio's holy cloister, or one should see St. John Lateran and the Basilica of the Holy Cross from the vineyards which are among the baths of Titus or of Caracalla, or the tower and domes of St. Mary Major, from the gardens near the gate of St. John."

And elsewhere he says :

"Rome alone seems invested with an interest which is present and eternal ; and yet, amid the astonishing concentration of present intellectual greatness there, who, standing upon that awful ground, can avoid thinking of the past, and yielding to its immortal recollections ? The approach to Rome is precisely what it ought to be. Nothing can be imagined more sublime, more proper to inspire meditation, and to fill the soul with the profoundest emotions of wonder for the past and of pious astonishment and reverence for the everlasting Ruler, than a view of the vast and solemn plains of the Campagna, in which the history of the world seems written in ruins, where no object appears but here and there

[1] Vol. i. p. 383.

some isolated fragment of an arched aqueduct or of a sepulchre, some aged cork-tree, or some spreading pine, near which shepherds are seen sitting together round a fire at night, keeping watch over their flocks. The thronged and noisy suburbs of a modern capital would belong to an order of ideas to which you would there deny admittance, for they would indicate too much of worldly solicitude to be in accordance with what naturally fills the breast of the Christian pilgrim as he approaches Rome." [1]

Kenelm Digby was fortunate to have first entered Rome before the age of railways, tram-cars, motor-cars, offices, and tenement buildings –all invasions of her ancient calm and brooding dignity. But when he first came there, in a Cambridge Long Vacation, he was not yet a Catholic, and perhaps in this romantic time of youth Rome pleased him less than scenes of wild nature and northern castles and churches. Not till some years later, in 1832 or 1833, " when the sixteenth Gregory sat in Peter's Chair," did he behold at Rome

" an assembly of the sacred college, which seemed to me the most august, majestic spectacle that could be furnished by humanity, in harmony with its Creator's will. Youth " [his own] " which was solitary, or conversant with the poor, amidst its favourite haunts had escaped from hearing the calumnies of men, and therefore there were no lurking vile delusions to obscure the vision. I marked in that audience the impress of every noble spirit ; I could distinguish the wisdom of a Justinian, the gentleness and goodness of a Rohan, the dignity and platonic majesty of a Micara, the unsated thirst of an Odeschalchi, the frankness and manly sincerity of a Zurla, and the unaffected humility of him who once ruled the towers of Lulworth. There was in one whose name is dear to Genoa, the air of a Gregory

[1] *Mores Catholici*, Book VII., chap. iv.

of Tours, in another the penetration of a Jerome, in another the simplicity of a Fénelon. These things did attract my soul's regard, and enable me to discover new beauties in history, and to feel the grandeur and tenderness of many scenes, the description of which may seem a rhetorical exaggeration, if one has not, from experience, an internal sense responsive to the writer's word."

Does the reader like this, or does he prefer the wild and ignorant ravings against priests of poets like Shelley or Swinburne? *Dis-moi ce que tu aimes, et je te dirai ce que tu es.*

Here is another little travel-picture, from Switzerland this time.

"I remember to what a golden world of bright and peaceful images I used to be transported, when straying of a summer's morning without the walls of Soleure, immediately after the first mass in the churches of the town. There one might walk through delightful meadows interspersed with groves like a continual garden, watered with a number of clear rivulets, sparkling amidst violet beds, studded with beautiful convents, chapels and crosses, with villas and pavilions adjoining. There one heard ascend through the clear air the sweet liquid symphony of the bells of the different monasteries, which are tolled at every elevation of the sacred mysteries, and these too seem to answer one another from hill to hill. There one saw the happy and courteous groups that passed along; the children, angel-mild, intent upon some office of domestic duty, the cheerful scholar, so anxious to salute the stranger, and the venerable old men, whose smile is like a benediction; and, if one entered to say a short prayer in the church of the convent, there would be seen at his devotions some noble proprietor of an adjacent castle, who always desired to be at the mass of the community. The humble little cloister too is open. See the poor devout prints which cover the walls, and the sweet flowers which

grow within the little court; and, through one of the small windows above, you catch a glimpse of some holy friar, who is meditating in his cell. What a peaceful and holy calm reigns around! the groves and meadows, the gardens and the surrounding hills seem to have imbibed the celestial tranquillity of the blessed enclosure."

"Ah," he says elsewhere, "those morning walks through fairest bowers of Italian shore, those mountain walks o'er moor and snowy Alp, those friends and comrades of our elastic youth, those enchanting moments of inhaling the sweetest loveliness of nature? Where are they? Who will give them back to us? At times men believe they are returning, but they mistake memory for hope. They are gone, yet not for ever perished. He who gave them can restore them; they were in his mind before we existed, and they will exist there, when we shall have removed hence. Ah! in heaven we may have again those early walks, fresher than ever the balmy breath of incense-breathing morn yielded on this earth. In heaven again we may have them all again, lakes, woods, mountains and Ausonian skies, the angels ever bright and fair, the friends and companions of our youth." [1]

Such may also be the consolation of those who mourn

> "To leave unseen so many a glorious sight,
> To leave so many a land unvisited;
> To leave so many worthiest books unread;
> Unrealised so many visions bright."

Kenelm Digby's works are full of these charming travel-pictures, and I hope that these few samples will attract to them some readers who like to be taken back into past days which did actually shine before a seeing eye. Digby in these early travels had the advantage that he could not go by trains, for there were none.

[1] *Mores Catholici*, vol. iii. p. 67.

He travelled on horseback, or on foot, or in post-chaises, or on the top of old diligences, and saw the world both closer and more romantically than the modern traveller by train, or even by motor-car. The old slow road-travelling brought men into much closer touch with each other, and, as Digby says, the chief use of travelling is to teach men to love and understand those of other nations. But he points out that, as, perhaps, an excess in this direction, the risks of *amours de voyage* were also greater. So many more nights were spent in lonely inns, there was so much more time for lingering conversation by the road, before the English invented railways, and vast hotels began to rise. "Speed has suppressed adventures," said a French writer of his time, Fromentin. It might chance that in Italy, when travelling with a hired veturino your fellow-passenger might be some one "rather used to a casino," who, needing some distractions by the way, might be inclined to "meddle with your heart," or, of an evening, darts might be shot by eyes across a narrow old street, or at an inn, where some "silent, shy one brought your dinner," a little too much tacit sympathy might arise, and just as you mounted your horse to ride away there might be something in a look to cause remorse.

> "'Tis certain in those ancient and slow times
> Were things that would not strictly suit these rhymes." [1]

On the whole, the express train, flying in a night over four hundred miles of France, or Italy, or Germany, is safer, though less romantic.

> "What sweet companions often too by chance
> He met in England, and no less in France,

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VII.

What invitations sometimes intervening,
While youth knew not, in truth, their real meaning.
What opportunity for many pranks,
And for which others vainer would give thanks." [1]

Such little adventures, or incipiencies of adventure, make half the charm of solitary roaming in days of youth. Nothing so tempting as *amours de voyage*, precisely because, by their very nature, they are so transient. Why are beautiful things transient? is the question put to the deity in Goethe's epigram: "Because only transient things are beautiful," answers the god.

Kenelm Digby liked to travel with little baggage, and raggedly, so as to save trouble and have unshackled freedom, and also to be more at home with the real people of the lands which he traversed, the humble and poor. Because of this he says in one of his books:

"I have been received as one of the people by those who loved them best" [priests] "and asked, in the confidence of holy affections, if I knew how to read. Because smiles were excited by my briar-torn clothes, I have been asked to guide belated travellers through dangerous lanes; for not 'stalking up and down, and wearing gentleman in my cap,' I have been invited civilly to read some lines too pale for delicate eyes, and, as if my place were waiting at a gate, like some knavish page or horse-boy, to hold the horses of an unknown dame. For being noticed daily as among the first comers, I have been archly asked by a friendly fellow-pupil in the Louvre how I happened to be proprietor of a watch; and merely because my hands were brown, I have been taken one time for an heir apparent to a poor fisher's boat, and at another for a dusty-footed, wayfaring scholar through the olive grounds of southern

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VII.

France, and, though some may disdain such motives, or even prove incapable of comprehending them, there are others for whom it does not form the least of the attractions of Catholicism to find that it rather approves than condemns the inclination which may be felt by one claiming kindred, through Montacutes and Nevills, with the pale ashes of the House of Lancaster, to be indistinguishable from the sons of the poor." [1]

Digby's dark hue and not at all English appearance came to aid his attire in achieving this object. With all his pleasure in foreign travel, he still loved to roam in shorter holidays, through England. Nowhere, he says, is the stranger so free from police suspicion and surveillance, and in no country are there so many pretty and charming girls.

> " It is young women here who are supreme,
> Who seem to change life to a summer's dream ;
> 'Tis not the hedge or garden here that shows
> Most the tall lily or the fragrant rose,
> The sweet carnation, or the blooming thorn,
> For like a flower here each girl seems born." [2]

There is something, he says, in English country towns, the walks by rivers, across fields, through woods, over downs, something especially in the footpaths and stiles, which he had never found outside England; and he thought that this " something " lies in the connection of these things with young women of the less assuming and more simple and natural classes, who, in this country, move in freedom which is cheerful and also usually innocent. Certainly an English stile calls up the shy vision of an English girl. He found abroad much that was grander and more picturesque and interesting, but nothing like " our sweet English homes." However, he thought that every race should be seen in its own

[1] *Compitum*, vol. i. p. 276.

[2] *Temple of Memory*, Canto V.

surroundings, the English amid corn or hops, and not amid the vineyards and olive-gardens of the South, the Spaniard or the Italian in their own, and not in an English landscape.

It happened that in the second week of September 1824, Kenelm Digby was driving homeward from a southern tour on a mail coach to Paris. At Besançon, early in the morning, he heard that Louis XVIII. was very ill, and at Dijon that he was in danger. At Troyes, next morning, there was rumour that the king was dead, and at Provins, in the evening, it was said that the Paris theatres had been closed.

"'Twas the last
They heard that night; for onwards then they passed
While risen high the moon hung pale and bright,
Which into Paris would their last stage light.
He always thought it solemn drawing near
To any capital; and so 'twas here.
The Mail, so certain in its steady flight,
Seemed to bring laws of nature to his sight,
As if from nothing else could ever be
Such sure and constant regularity;
But never felt he this impression more
Than now, as he can read in memory's store.
You know those endless avenues which shade
All roads to Paris. Theirs that night was made
More solemn still when they at times were passed
By some express who galloped by them fast,
No other signs of life in all around,
Such solitude upon the road was found,
By trees o'ershadowed, with vast plains in sight,
And scattered hamlets clear in lunar light.
In mind he wandered o'er the landscape there
And felt some change was pending in the air,
While as he gazed upon the moon so high,
He thought of Louis, then about to die,
For, after all, howe'er we spend our breath,
There's more than common in a monarch's death.
Arrived at last, the king was not yet dead,
But the last prayers around him had been said,

While he, expecting death, did calmly lie,
Evincing great and noble constancy." [1]

Louis died at four in the morning of September 15th, the last of the long line of kings of France who was to die in his palace. His body lay in state for two days at the Tuileries, and the funeral at St. Denis was on the 23rd.

Digby, as the king lay dying, found crowds of people of all classes in prayer at Nôtre Dame and St. Roch. The morning of the 15th, at six, he saw King Charles X. driving out from the Palace Court to St. Cloud. When the Grand Almoner approached to hear the last confession, the dying king had turned to his brother and said, with a dignity worthy of Louis XIV., "My brother, you have affairs which claim your presence, I also have duties to fulfil."

Then Digby heard all the solemn bells of Paris tolling, the Bourdon of Nôtre Dame deep-sounding above them all; and on the 23rd he witnessed the procession, last in the long history of the kings of France, across the plain to St. Denis, according to ancient ceremonial, some hundred poor men, monastically hooded, filing by, among the rest, with tapers. The full brief bloom of the pleasant and fruitful Restoration period was now over.

Six years later, Kenelm Digby was passing the summer working at his great book, *Mores Catholici*, in a lodging in the Rue Grenelle at St. Germain, near Paris, and often came in, chiefly engaged in his favourite pastime of old-book hunting along the "Quais." At that time, even more than now, Paris, after so many libraries of châteaux and monasteries had been dispersed in the Revolution, was the earthly paradise of this

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VII.

kind of sportsman, and the centre was the great bookshop of the famous Merlin.

"With what enthusiasm," says Digby, "used I to stride along those intricate alleys from the quay of St. Augustine to the street of straw, immortalized by Dante . . . streets that at another time at least seemed, and in many instances with truth, to preserve, as in a last asylum, the homely ways and serene thoughts of poetic and scholastic times, where one house had its store of knightly romances, so costly and so curious, another its books, in binding emblazoned with the arms of noble owners, of falconry and hunting, another its monastic philosophers and poets, in solid boards with clasps of iron, another its venerable vellum-bound chronicles, another its works of forest literature." [1]

Then Digby would carry off some prize and make his first dip into it under the trees in the Tuileries gardens, or in the Luxembourg gardens, frequented by students and their pretty friends, and think that this would be an addition, some day, to a house he would have in England. Alas! the utilitarian rage of the Third Republic for broad, straight, dull avenues, such as the Rue Raspail, has almost destroyed that "Latin country" with its "narrow, picturesque streets, where, in so many sunny vine-clad courts, and up so many antique turrets, and within so many homes of almost cloistral seclusion, reigned still [in Digby's Paris days], or might be thought to reign, the manners and habits of the 'ménagier de Paris,' or of the middle classes in the days of St. Louis."

Wednesday, July 27th, 1830, was not a day favourable to the calm pursuit of book-hunting in the *pays Latin*. The day had been too intensely hot to do anything, and

[1] *Evenings on the Thames*, chap. xii.

book-hunting, which involves long standing about, is fatiguing. Digby spent most of it in the cool shades of St. Germain, and towards evening, tired of reading and note-taking, came in to Paris, about sunset, to drink coffee and look at the newspapers, since politics just then were rather exciting. The sky was still "pale with golden light" when he entered the café of Desmarcs, an aristocratic resort of men of the ancient régime kind. A waiter who knew him whispered, "Monsieur, take care to go round the Palais Royal and not into it, *on tire sur le peuple*." The "three days" had begun. Digby watched the fray with caution. He heard the firing and saw many dead bodies floating down the Seine those days. Digby would not wear the tricolour in the streets, though there was danger in not doing so. His sympathies were with the fallen Monarchy, not with the democratic Revolution, and when he returned to London he found himself out of touch with all the journals which said that these were glorious days for France. No wonder, since the immediate cause of the movement was the attempt by the Government of Charles X. to curb the license of the press. Besides, the mass of the English always do like, of all things, to see the fall of a foreign throne, for this, more than anything else, confirms them in the good opinion which they have of the excellence of their own popular institutions, and, sometimes, of their compromise in religion, their moderate and rational Church. They look complacently, as it were, from their solid-seeming shore upon ships wrecked by ocean storms. This attitude was especially characteristic of our happy and prosperous age of Queen Victoria, after the Reform Bill had made our shore more solid-seeming than ever.

CHAPTER III

CONVERSION TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

"But for you these difficulties are removed; the night is past: a bright and everlasting day has dawned; there is an end of wandering and uncertainty, of doubt and disputation. All the articles of faith and all the truths of revelation are immoveably and definitely settled." KENELM DIGBY, *Broadstone of Honour*, "*Morus.*"

At the end of the year 1825 Kenelm Digby was received into the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church. He relates the story of his spiritual voyage in the eleventh canto of his poem called *The Temple of Memory*.

Digby's immediate paternal family was intensely Protestant, Anglo-Irish Protestant, and had been in the past closely connected with the good things of the Irish ecclesiastical Establishment. Whence came his own disposition? Perhaps through his Devonshire-descended mother, of whom so little is known; and then, his boyish mind, like that of so many others, was turned in a Catholic direction by the chivalrous poems of Walter Scott, and other writers of the inflowing romantic tide. To read *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and at the same time to be living on Irish soil but among Irish Protestants, might well produce in an imaginative and romantic youth a ground fit for the reception of Catholic doctrine and ritual.

At school, at Petersham by the soft gliding Thames, as it happened, Kenelm Digby came across two learned

elderly Catholic gentlemen, Mr. Charles Butler and Sir Henry Englefield.[1] They spoke mainly of classic themes, Homer and Virgil, never about religious questions; but the boy was impressed by a certain tone and reserve and mysterious stamp about them. Charles Butler was a man of much worth. He was born in 1750, so that he was over sixty when the boy Kenelm came across him. He was nephew of the learned Alban Butler, who wrote the *Lives of the Saints*. He had been educated at a Catholic school near London and afterwards at the English College at Douai. He became a conveyancing draftsman and consultant at Lincoln's Inn, and obtained a large practice. The Act of 1791 graciously allowed Catholics to be called to the Bar without denying the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the Sacrifice of the Mass, and Invocation of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints; and Butler took advantage of this, and at last became a King's Counsel and Bencher of Lincoln's Inn. He was a Liberal in politics, following with moderation the ideas of Fox, and strongly "Gallican" in church views, being a member of the Cis-Alpine Club established in 1792, and, at one time, on strained terms with the Vicars-Apostolic, especially Dr. Milner. He was, all the same, a thorough Catholic of the school of Bossuet, and was a strong advocate in defence of the Church and its doctrines, and had a controversy upon these subjects with that bitter anti-Roman, the writer Robert Southey, of the Lakes. Butler wrote nearly fifty books and pamphlets on various legal and religious-historical matters. He said that he got through

[1] Sir Henry Englefield, Bt., 1752-1822, wrote much on scientific and other subjects, also in defence of the Church. Charles Fox said that he "never left his company uninstructed."

so much work in addition to his large conveyancing practice by following these maxims—worth record :

" Very early rising, a systematic division of my time, abstinence from all company, and from all diversions not likely to amuse me highly, and from reading, writing, or even thinking on modern party politics, and above all, never permitting a bit or scrap of time to be unemployed, have supplied me with an abundance of literary hours. My literary acquisitions are principally owing to the rigid observation of four rules, to direct my attention to one literary object only at a time, to read the best book on it, consulting others as little as possible ; when the subject was contentious to read the best book on each side ; to find out men of information, and, when in their society, to listen, not to talk."

Charles Butler died in 1832, at the age of eighty-two. No wonder that a mind so solidly fortified and stored had its effect upon the impressionable boy, even though the talk was not directly of religion, for thought can pass without speech.

Thus Kenelm went to Cambridge, influenced already, without knowing it, in the direction of the Centre, and after he was established there he began to travel abroad in Long Vacations. Never, he says, can he forget the " visions in his soul " when he first entered a Catholic church beyond the sea, for he had never entered one in Ireland or England, and saw the lighted altars, the kneeling figures. But when he wrote this in his old age he perhaps over-estimated the effect which this first impression had immediately made, although it was considerable. In his first Long Vacation journey, Digby, with some friends, landed at Ostend, whence they travelled through Belgium up the Rhine, through Switzerland to the Italian Lakes, and back by the

Simplon, Genoa, Lyons and Paris. A travel journal of his, still extant in MS., and adorned with numerous sketches, relates this voyage. It was at Ostend that Kenelm Digby, then about eighteen or nineteen, entered a Catholic church for the first of thousands of times. The journal says :

" On entering this Church we had our first view of Popish superstition. There were persons at their devotions and a dead silence reigned around. The effect was imposing. The women, wearing black hoods, were kneeling before the altars. The men opened their arms and grasped their hands with fervour. One knelt by himself in a corner praying very earnestly to some thin wax candles on which his eyes were rivetted."

At Ghent he says :

" In all these churches one is particularly struck with the attention and propriety of the people present. Indeed I do not believe that there is a man in existence who would not be struck with reverence on entering these solemn places, where, if we except the service and operations of the priests, there is everything in character with the awful purpose to which the place is dedicated. Undoubtedly the attention of the people is sometimes observed when an Englishman of the most sober disposition can hardly refrain from laughter. For instance, when the priests, like so many conjurors, are going through their incomprehensible operations before the altar. What can be more ridiculous than to see these grave persons turning themselves about like so many idiots, etc. . . . Yet during all this time there is not a single individual to be observed either inattentive or behaving irreverently. To a simple, honest Englishman this seems quite a paradox. He is told and he believes that the religion of his country is infinitely more pure and sublime, and yet he knows that the behaviour of the people in the English churches is

as strongly characteristic of levity and inattention, as that of these persons is of reverence and decorum. A little philosophy will remove this mystery by teaching him that there is a natural tendency in the human mind to love error rather than truth."

This shallow philosophy was much affected by English writers of a hundred and more years ago, even by a man so distinguished as Archbishop Whateley, but Digby was soon to learn to reason more correctly, from effect to cause. At present, however, he was in the mental condition of the usual Protestant youth who first comes across the Catholic religion. At Paris, in the same tour, Digby inserts in his journal a plea for Voltaire and Rousseau.

"No characters are more deserving of pity. They were men of vast genius and of powerful understandings; they were disgusted with the cruelty, the injustice, and cold-blooded corruption of their own Church, and knowing no other Christianity but what was united with Popedom, indulgences, and all the train of wickedness and follies attached to the system, in the warmth of their zeal they were nearly renouncing it all. But let no man judge them for what they thought; but rather let everybody be thankful who has been born under different circumstances, and who cannot help seeing things under a different point of view."

Kenelm forgot that Rousseau, at least, had not been born and bred a Papist. He saw King Louis XVIII. at Mass in the Tuileries Chapel in full state. "Never was there a greater complication of folly." After Mass he saw the old King "waddling" before a rather chilly public across the Palace garden, and thought of the different scene when Napoleon returned from Elba and was literally borne into the Palace on the shoulders

of the people. "Where," asks Digby, "is the man who would not gladly see the continuance of those days [of Napoleon] rather than the return of that dark empire when Priests held a dominion over the minds and bodies of men, which kept all Europe in ignorance and misery, which was the disgrace of Christianity, and the scourge of human kind?" Yet, notwithstanding this condemnation by his young mind, those kneeling figures had made an ineffaceable and operative impression. In his old-age poem, *The Temple of Memory*, he says that he asked himself, "Is this what men mean when they talk of prayer?" In his travels during the next few years this first impression of the reality of the Catholic cult was deepened, especially by what he saw in the monasteries of Austria and Switzerland and Italy, while his ignorance was enlightened and prejudice removed by reading and conversation, especially in France.

As to these first impressions made by the cult, the novelty and the contrast was obviously far greater then than it would be now to one accustomed to modern "high" ritual in Anglican churches. For this reason modern conversions rest upon a deeper and sounder and more permanent basis than some of the early ones. A man must now feel—"I have all the cult in many Anglican churches that I could have in Catholic churches, and yet . . ."

Kenelm was now led by impressions in further travels abroad, and by his reading, in the Catholic direction. He was now writing his *Broadstone of Honour*, so that his line of reading can be easily traced. He studied in Trinity College Library St. Augustine and Bossuet, who teach as to the Church the same thing, yet, for a space, he was still held enchanted by the spell of College

chapels. The strength of the Church of England lies in music. Could he ever resolve, he says, to cease to hear at evening prayer the soft "Lighten our darkness," or on chill Advent mornings the "Now in this our time of mortal life"? Nothing, certainly, is more beautiful than sounds like these in some historic chapel like King's at Cambridge, or St. Mary's at Eton, or St. George's at Windsor. These services seem to suit such buildings, built on the eve of the Renaissance, or St. Paul's Cathedral in London, better than they suit mediaeval cathedrals. Like the Renaissance architecture, the good old Anglican service is clear-cut, distinct, reasonable, restrained and temperate—the triumph of common sense over imagination.

"What," Digby now asked himself, "did the learned men of Cambridge believe?" The great teacher of religious philosophy at Trinity was then Julius Hare. He taught his young hearers to distrust the guidance of reason, pure and simple, *la raison raisonnante*, to despise Locke and Paley, and to deem Bishop Burnet, the historian of the English Reformation, "a vulgar fool." Foreign Catholic writers, it seemed, were, according to Julius Hare, chiefly to be honoured, such as the French authors de Bonald and the ultramontane Count de Maistre, and the German authors Stolberg, F. Schlegel, Goerres, Hurter, Vogt. Julius Hare lent to Kenelm German books inspired by the Catholic Faith in its new romantic guise. Yet, to the dismay of the ardent Kenelm, Julius Hare would to the last call Luther "that god-like man."[1]

[1] Hare used to say that it was from Luther he learned to "throw inkpots at the Devil." An excellent account of him is given by Augustus Hare in *Memorials of a Quiet Life*.

Kenelm Digby also read histories of the Reformation which gave original documents, especially the voluminous records of that honest old Protestant, Strype, who lived not far from the period and shows things as they really were. It seemed to Digby that the leading motives of the men who broke with Rome and made essential changes in the ancient doctrines and ritual of religion in England were of the most material and secular kind, and that they were a minority forcing their policy upon a mostly reluctant people who had no real voice in the matter, and lost by the changes then made. A most learned and thorough English historian, not himself a Catholic, Dr. Gardiner, has written :

"That Rome exercised her spiritual power by the willing obedience of Englishmen in general, and that they regarded it as a really wholesome power, even for the control it exercised over secular tyranny, is a fact which it requires no very intimate knowledge of early English literature to bring home to us. . . . It was only after an able and despotic king had proved himself stronger than the spiritual power of Rome that the people of England were divorced from their Roman allegiance, and there is abundant evidence that they were divorced from it at first against their will."

First came the breach, the act of will, and then, to justify it, theories arose about the Church. And these theories have ever since been in a Protean process of perpetual change and variation, in accordance with the changing humours of various times.

In addition to the history there was the immense attraction of Rome for a chivalrous spirit and a very human heart. Kenelm Digby knew by instinct that the ancient religion of his forefathers would give him the something, at once divine and universally human,

for which his soul craved. He loved all the rites of the Catholic Church, as he had seen them abroad, and felt at one with her true sons and daughters in all lands and of all races and of all social orders. By the year 1823 he was already in heart a convinced Catholic.

At Paris—in the autumn of 1825—he asked an aged friend, M. Chevalier, to recommend him some priest who would receive him. His friend advised him to go to a learned divine of the Sorbonne, who met him, when he learned his intention, "with blank dismay." *Monsieur* was too young, said the priest; what would his relatives say? He would like to know that first. Kenelm was too young, imprudent and romantic; besides, said the priest, living at the Sorbonne, he did not wish to mix himself in such affairs, and, *enfin*, he said, pointing to a loaded table, he had a great deal of proof-correcting to do, and no time, just then. Let his young friend go home and consult his family. If he then should wish to proceed with his design he would, no doubt, find in England some one more skilled to deal with things of this kind. "*Adieu, Monsieur, au revoir.*"

Returning to England after this discouraging beginning, Kenelm heard of a priest who lived in Castle Street, in the depths of London, and, without delay, went from Cambridge to find him. This priest received him very drily, asked where he was staying in town, and advised him to repair to another priest who lived in the slums of Westminster. Kenelm sought him, but found him not at home that day, nor the next. He then called on the lawyer, Charles Butler, whom he had known in Petersham days. Mr. Butler gave him a letter to Father Scott, of the Society of Jesus, who, at last, guided him, through the narrow door where one

must bend one's head, into the internal space and freedom of the eternal and universal Catholic Church. Kenelm Digby, in his later book, *Compitum*, gives a noble description of this Father :

" From his deep, practical knowledge of the world statesmen might have learned wisdom of government, while from his daily exercises of piety children could learn the simplicity which is their sweetest attribute. Deficient in no branch of human learning, yielding to no one in the depth of his admiration for all that belongs to the highest mysticism, he retained what is most difficult, as Tacitus says, and perhaps as the greatest of Christian philosophers would also admit, *ex sapientiâ modum*."

After this, Digby mostly lived at Cambridge, when not abroad, for some years, reading in the libraries books not often in modern days disturbed from their secular repose, and decanting their contents into volumes of his own making. The authorities of Trinity College kindly allowed him for some time to have rooms in Bishop's Hostel, just south of the Great Court. They were tolerant and wide-minded men. One day the famous geologist, Adam Sedgwick, sent his " grave-faced gyp " to ask Mr. Digby to step across to his rooms after dinner. Kenelm went in some alarm, asking himself, " What can the great Sedgwick have to say to me ? " Sedgwick had some books of divinity on his table, and as Kenelm entered, was turning over the leaves of a volume of Barrow. He laughed, and remarked that he did not think that these Church of England writers knew what they wished to say, and that Barrow only seemed to irritate himself when writing on the power of the keys. Sedgwick then replaced that learned author on the shelf and said :

"Perhaps you will laugh when you know for what a small reason I have sent for you. You know that some people blame me—I need not say who they are—because I like to greet anyone I meet without any regard to their creed. Well, I have been all this Long Vacation in Styria and Carinthia, where I have seen Catholic populations, and I swear! I don't care what our Dons say, believe me, that never, never, did I see a people I liked better or whom I would rather remember, as the best of mankind. Of course I know very well what you are now, and I thought you would like to hear me tell you this, as it was sure to please you. So come again, and soon."

This little episode must have been in the autumn term of 1829, for the *Life of Adam Sedgwick* shows that his geological tour in those regions was in the Long Vacation of that year. In a letter to a friend, written on September 14th, 1829, from Gmunden, near Salzburg, Sedgwick says that Styria is "a most lovely country, peopled by a most beautiful race, who are simple and kind-hearted beyond everything I have ever seen."

Not only Sedgwick, but all the Trinity Dons were kind, it seems, to Digby, in spite of his strange lapse. He says the real reason was that they looked on him as an eccentric youth, and that such a change, hardly ever heard of then, some years before the Oxford Movement began, seemed to them "a kind of mad-cap trait" so strange and new that it was almost pleasing. He would have few imitators, they said, if any. "Clearly it was chivalry that led him, and there's not much to fear now from that taste." Whewell, he says, consistent throughout, continued to be "a dear and constant friend" till his death, the most indulgent of all. No doubt, after the Oxford Tracts began to circulate, the

Cambridge authorities would not have been quite so placid; yet toleration has always been a note of Cambridge. Sobered perhaps by the calm and abstract pursuit of mathematics and science, Cambridge has never been so much under the influence of mirage as Oxford.

Then, again, men like Whewell, Sedgwick, Romilly, Julius Hare, were all Liberals in religion and politics, and all, in opposition to the Tory prejudice, still so strong at both Universities, were supporters of the cause of Catholic Emancipation. Thirty years of arguments in this cause had disposed the Whigs to find, at any rate, harmless virtues in the Catholics whose cause, though not at all for Catholic or religious reasons, they had espoused. Digby, throughout life, preferred these kindly and genuine Protestants to men of the Oxford Tractarian School, whom he thought dangerous, though well-meaning, mis-leaders, nor did he ever share the admiration of his friend Ambrose Phillips de Lisle for these last, or his enthusiastic hopes for "corporate reunion." He thought that, as he says,

> "Vessels out at sea are safe far more
> Than those, steered wrong, left stranded on the shore;"

and that the Liberal Cambridge Protestant, sailing cheerfully on the unfathomed deep, was, on this principle, safer than the Oxford Tractarian, driven by the Catholic wind on to the rocks of the Roman shore. Kenelm Digby had so few near kinsfolk, and saw so little of these, since they lived in Ireland, that he was not much troubled by family reprehension. A half-brother of his, Benjamin Digby, a good deal older, who was a Rector, and even an Archdeacon in the Irish Church, a very pious clergyman of Calvinistic views, who thought (he wrote) that "Romanism was

nothing but Pelagianism," expressed vast surprise that Kenelm could do a thing so obviously ridiculous and erroneous and contrary to Scripture, but afterwards, as before, maintained an affectionate correspondence with his erring junior.

After October 1826 Kenelm Digby had for two years one young Catholic friend "ensconced in Nevill's Court," in Trinity, who had a store of precious books bound in white vellum, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish. He was nine years younger than Kenelm, of angelic character and fervent religious zeal, and many were attracted to resort to his rooms. A Trinity tutor, seeing them together one day, said, "I wish I could make a third with you two." This young friend was Ambrose Lisle March Phillips, who afterwards took the name of Phillips de Lisle, of Garendon and Grace Dieu in Leicestershire. He became a Catholic at fifteen, on 21st December, 1825, and went up to Cambridge at the same time as Edward Fitzgerald in October 1826. He and Kenelm Digby were then probably the only Catholics at Cambridge. In a letter to Ambrose on 9th February, 1827, Bishop Poynter, then Vicar-Apostolic of the London district, wrote: "I am glad that you have such an excellent companion in Trinity College as Mr. Digby. He has been so good as to send me the second edition of *Morus*, which I open when I have a leisure moment, and read with pleasure." In another letter the Bishop said: "Pray give my best compliments and wishes to Mr. Digby, when you write to him. You cannot cultivate a more valuable correspondence than that which you hold with him." [1]

The conversion of another distinguished Cambridge

[1] *Life of Ambrose Phillips de Lisle.*

man, the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer, afterwards known as Father Ignatius of St. Paul, the Passionist, did not take place until 1830. "Holy Spencer," he is called by Digby in *The Temple of Memory*. He was the son of the second Earl Spencer. He was almost exactly the same age as Digby, for he was born in 1799, and after Eton, came up to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1817. Digby seems to have known him only slightly at Cambridge, where Spencer belonged, though reproached for it by his own conscience, to the "smart set." Afterwards, Spencer took orders in the Church of England, and in 1830, under the influence partly of foreign travel and partly of Ambrose de Lisle, if indeed one can ascribe these things to such influences as secondary causes, he became a Catholic. He became a Passionist Father, and after a holy and laborious life, died in 1864, twelve years before the death of de Lisle in 1878, and sixteen before that of Kenelm Digby in 1880.

These three Cambridge men, Digby, de Lisle and Spencer, a trinity of Trinity, all became Catholics before the Oxford Movement had begun. Each of them contributed his share to the return towards Catholic principles which brought many to the Chair of St. Peter, and brought far more to the half-way shelter which began to arise within the Anglican Church. Kenelm Digby contributed to this by his writings, Ambrose de Lisle by his enthusiastic propaganda in action, and Spencer by his personal influence. Thus the Catholic movement began, as a matter of fact, not at Oxford, but in the more decidedly Protestant University of Cambridge. The reason, perhaps, is that Cambridge was less isolated than Oxford then was in narrow self-esteem, and more open to Continental

influences. Thus it was sooner touched by the great wave of the romantic return to the mediaeval spirit, which was sweeping over Germany and even France, as a reaction against the strictly classical spirit of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period. Chateaubriand, in France, was the first to launch his gallant boat upon the new tide. But the movement came about chiefly from the revival of the ancient and romantic national spirit of Germany against the classical spirit of the French Revolution culminating in Napoleon, and since England was for twenty years in a virtual and often also fighting alliance with Germanic powers, the English had for a time more sympathy with Teuton ideas than they ever have had before, except, perhaps, in Luther's time, or certainly since. One can see this in the poems and ballads of Walter Scott, the writings of Coleridge, and in the early writings of a near contemporary of Digby's, Thomas Carlyle.

Although the movement of return to Rome thus began at Cambridge, it has not been so prolific in results at that University as in the more emotional Oxford. Mr. Gordon-Gorman, in his work called *Converts to Rome*, reckons that in the sixty years ending in 1910 Oxford had given 586 converts and Cambridge 346, not a large number, certainly, out of the thousands who passed through the two Universities in that period. Of the 346 Cambridge converts 102 were Trinity men, a larger number than produced by any college in either University. As a nursery of converts to the Catholic Faith, Trinity has held, among colleges, the same dominant position as Eton among public schools. This is probably due not only to the fact that Trinity is, in numbers, the greatest of colleges and Eton of schools, but also to

the fact that a larger, serener and more spacious moral and intellectual atmosphere prevails in these two great institutions than in any others, favourable to an open, noble and generous view of history and religion.

When Digby became a Catholic, English Catholics still were disqualified from sitting in Parliament. It was not long since they had received more than the barest toleration in the practice of their religion. Acts of Parliament had been directed against them in every reign, except that of James II., from Elizabeth till George II. As Charles Fox said in a speech in 1791 of this system :

"Such persecution and oppression as existed in England did not exist in any country. In all the King of Prussia's dominions universal toleration prevailed, in the united states of Holland, in the united states of America, and in France there was likewise to be found universal toleration. . . . Yet, although toleration fully obtained in a monarchical and in an aristocratical government, as well as in two democracies, under our boasted constitution it was narrowed and confined in shackles disgraceful to humanity."

The Act of 1791 provided (*inter alia*) that no person who took a certain oath with regard to any papal claims to temporal jurisdiction in England (which Catholics could take, though not in the opinion of all of them) should any longer be liable to prosecution, under a number of previous Acts, for not attending the parish church, or keeping servants who did not attend. It was also enacted that no person who took the oath should be liable to punishment, in some cases that of death, strictly speaking, "for hearing or saying Mass," or for performing or attending other ceremonies of the Church

of Rome, or for "being a Papist," or for belonging to an Order in that Church, or for "being educated in the Popish religion." This Act also legalized Catholic churches and schools, for the first time, though it made it illegal for such a church to have a steeple or a bell, a characteristic English compromise. An alien church might be visible, now, but not *too* visible.

This Act, very easily passed by Pitt's Government, contained a number of limitations and safeguards in order to smooth its passage, but it was a fair concession. Not till many more years had passed were Catholics allowed to sit in either House of Parliament, or hold any national or local public office, or Commissions in Army or Navy, or take degrees in the Universities. Still, as Burke said in the debate, it was no longer to be the law of England that "a man who had worshipped God in his own way was liable to be condemned for high treason." [1]

The concession to Catholics by this Act certainly was not excessive, but it raised their spirit from the weight of degradation, and relieved them from the sense of existing, as they had hitherto done, merely on sufferance

[1] The following story shows how obsolete these penal laws had become. Some informers brought an action in 1765 against a Vicar-Apostolic, Monsignor Talbot, for saying Mass, and the case came on before Lord Mansfield. If the fact were proved, the Judge had no option but to direct the Jury to find the accused guilty, and then had, strictly speaking, to condemn him to be hung, drawn, and quartered. Lord Mansfield was determined not to do this. He asked the first witness how he heard the priest saying Mass. "Through a door, my Lord." "What did you hear him say?" "I heard him beginning with '*Confiteo*,' my Lord." Lord Mansfield turned to the Jury and said, "This witness is a liar, we all know that the Mass is in Latin. *Confiteo* is not Latin. This case must be dismissed."

He did not think it necessary to tell the Jury that *Confiteor* was a Latin word.

and non-enforcement of law. Soon afterwards Bishop Douglas, Vicar-Apostolic of the London district from 1790 to 1812, wrote, "The Catholic Religion is now beginning to flourish, and, as public services and sermons in the chapels are now permitted, many conversions are the result."

Before 1791 the Established Church, or rather, the Protestant Religion, had been strictly protected in England, so much so that even foreign books of devotion, rosaries, crucifixes and so forth could be, and often were, seized and confiscated at the ports as contraband and prohibited goods. They had to be smuggled in like foreign lace or spirits. But now began to dawn the era of free-trade in religion at the same moment that saw the first beginnings of free-trade in commerce. In both cases there was a reaction against the exclusive and protective policy of the Whig aristocracy dominant in the eighteenth century, who, after 1800, when they had become a minority in opposition, went in for Catholic Emancipation, leaving to the Tories their discarded principles of protection in religion and trade. The long oppressive and suppressive period had all but destroyed Catholicism in every part of England except Lancashire, and nowhere was it weaker than in the eastern and south-eastern counties, although London, as the common resort from all parts, had a certain proportion of Irish and other Catholics in its miscellaneous population. The poet Crabbe, drawing his experience from Suffolk in his poem *The Borough*, written in 1809, thus depicts the remnant of the faithful in that region, only a few years before Digby went to Cambridge.

> "Among her sons, with us a quiet few
> Obscure themselves, her ancient state review,

> And fond and melancholy glances cast
> On power insulted, and on triumph past.
> They look, they can but look, with many a sigh
> On sacred buildings doomed in dust to lie ;
> Of seats, they tell, where priests 'mid tapers dim
> Breathed the warm prayer, or tuned the midnight hymn,
> Where trembling penitents their guilt confessed,
> Where want had succour, and contrition rest."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Such is the change they mourn ; but they restrain
> The rage of grief, and passively complain."

After 1791 the horrors of the French Revolution and the war of England against the atheistical Government of France led to a still kinder view and better understanding of the Catholic and Roman Church, especially since England was now filled with Catholic refugees, as she had once been by French Protestant refugees, and French priests became teachers in many English families. But the result of the long suppression in England was that, unless in Lancashire and London, and here and there attached to the house of some Catholic squire, there were very few Catholic places of worship in England. In 1825, when Digby became a Catholic, there was no Catholic church or chapel in Cambridge. Twenty-six miles away, in Hertfordshire, at Old Hall, was a house of English Seculars established in 1568 at Douai, and driven back to England in 1793 by the French Revolution. St. Edmund's College had been founded here in 1795. It was a seminary for theologic students and a school for boys.

Digby, with Ambrose de Lisle, while the latter was at Cambridge, rode over there, fasting, on many Sundays to early Communion, High Mass, Vespers. He rode back in the evening, through darkness in winter, usually arriving in Cambridge as St. Mary's bell chimed nine

o'clock and, according to its invariable custom at that hour, repeated the number of days in the month till then. He rode the twenty-six miles each way in two hours and a half, so that his horse " Cannon-Ball " must have been, as he says, a stout trotter. The authorities kindly dispensed in favour of Digby and de Lisle with the then prevailing rule, that no University man might ride a horse on Sunday.

He loved the " still, fair chapel " of Old Hall and the solemn strains, so unlike, he says, in depth and sincerity of feeling to the beautiful but soul-less chantings of a mercenary choir. He used to dine with the fathers, and loved the conversation of these solid men of good-will. " The type of college dons was here unknown." He was much struck by the difference of their talk from that of college high tables; no studied airs at Old Hall, or intellectual pose, or desire to " show off," or intimations of a secret knowledge of high life, or wish to seem acquainted with the world. They were content to be and seem what they were, than which nothing is more restful, or charming in intercourse, with a certain homely air about their real learning. In all his travels Kenelm Digby visited monasteries in divers lands, many, or most of which, alas! have now been destroyed by Liberal Governments. No layman has seen more of this kind of life, or written more beautifully or instructively about it.

Digby could, however, also go, and often did go, to the domestic chapel in the ancient Catholic house of Sauston Hall, near the slopes which are humorously named the Gog Magog hills. He gives an account of this place in an old-age volume of verse called *Little Low Bushes*. The house belonged to a family named Huddleston.

Sir John Huddleston had, for one night, entertained Tudor Queen Mary, and, the day after she left, his house had therefore been burnt down by a fanatic mob issuing out of Puritan Cambridge. The Queen ordered Cambridge Town to pay the cost of rebuilding, but this had not been finished when she died, and never was; and as, until the reign of George III., the family had to pay £20 a month for not attending parish church, they had been kept poor. It was a weird old house, with a chapel and priest's hiding-hole on the top floor, and a few Spanish pictures. Its then owner, who had been educated abroad by Dominicans, was a man of character and deep learning, Major Huddleston. Young Kenelm made his friendship, and his metrical description of him, though long, is a picture worth quoting. After describing the house at length, and the appearance of the old Catholic gentleman, he says of him:

"Humanity, that great and holy word
Without which all is false and vain, absurd,
Did stamp its character upon his mind
Where all soft, tender things you ever find,
Versed from his boyhood in patristic lore,
Enriched with maxims from the schoolmen's store,
Accustomed to behold the darts of those
Who, hostile to his faith, would still propose
That 'foolish babbling' which our martyrs thought
More painful than the wounds the rack had wrought.[1]
Familiar with the ancient good and wise,
He still was modern, which can some surprise.
His ways were gentle, to all others sweet
And simple as the lads that fill the street.
No harshness or severity was there;
His learning he would daily bring to bear
On all the passing matters of the day
In such a mild and unpedantic way,

[1] *I.e.* the "foolish babbling" of Protestant chaplains or ministers which the martyrs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had to endure in prison, and even at the gallows.

You knew not which to wonder at the most,
His sense, or inability to boast.

And then, in fine, his studied moderation
Presents a theme, indeed, for contemplation :
Since it would seem at present as if we
Did want, what it demands, much energy ;
For weakness rushes on to find the end,
But strength on each small item time will spend.
To leave at rest was, sooth, his constant rule
Intricate questions, fitted for the school.

. . . . . .

Though subtle and most learned, still was he
Inclined to what you'd call Faith's poetry.
The genius of Religion was for him
Not a web-woven, theologic whim,
A dusty, dry expansion, by some brain
Acute, but narrow, all truth to contain ;
He rather, like Chateaubriand, comprised
In that expression what all hearts have prized
Not as poetical to them first known
But as old custom, and familiar grown.
As for the men who vilified his Creed,
Of facts alone he said they stood in need ;
He found that their objections spring at first
From pure mis-statements, whence their anger-burst ;
From men's confounding errors of an age
With what at all times knew and taught the Sage.
Mere pagan gloom, and all dark superstition
Were objects of his own old Faith's aversion.
He said no pleasure ever with her dies
Unless through her consuming ecstasies.
Humanity and Faith for him were one,
The horrid phantoms conjured up were gone ;
He gave you but a plain unvarnished view,
The darkness vanished, and the light was new
To those who long had been led far astray
By wandering fires that danced across their way.
Right strict in each observance as of old,
He said that each did some wise end enfold,
Just in the least as in the greatest things.
Impartial sentence on himself he brings
Uncompromising where he is the man,
Yet find excuse for others still he can ;

Extenuations fertile to invent
You'd think to plead for all men he was sent.
Patient and tolerant, forgiving, he
Displayed the type of all true sanctity.
No views immoderate did darken there
The pure bright light of this wise man of prayer.
He'd smile at times, and say some went too far,
But as to praising them he knew no bar,
Because, opinions still dividing schools,
No mind that's absolute e'er wholly rules.
He saw no reason to correct the phrase
Of Vincent, in those very ancient days,
That unity in faith must still abound,
With liberty in dubious things around,
While still in all things charity must be,
Or else the whole deserves our mockery.
Exaggeration, finally, to him
Seemed nought, unless some one man's foolish whim.
The best things, once thus pushed as to extreme
He thought a fitful and distempered dream.
So now you have his portrait standing there
As if to that old house you did repair:
It was a face Velasquez' hand should paint,
The English gentleman, the scholar, saint."

Is there not something rather refreshing in this plain and Crabbe-like verse, in these days when poetry has become so very subtle and clever and misty? Edward Fitzgerald would have thought so, but he never came across the old-age verse of the Kenelm Digby whom he saw and admired in undergraduate days at Cambridge.

Ambrose de Lisle always remained an affectionate friend of Kenelm Digby's and maintained a long correspondence with him. In one letter, written in 1842, De Lisle reminds him of the

"excursions of which we made so many together in those happy days at Cambridge. For happy days I must call them, and a very sweet memory they left to me, though indeed God has given me so many substantial blessings since that I might be tempted to

forget those others. And yet why should I? Has not each period of human life its appropriate blessings, as each season of the year its peculiar charm? So it is, and therefore I never look back upon those happy days of my early youth, in which my chief happiness is associated with the remembrance of you—I say I never look back upon them without a sigh, for they are gone, and when one says that, one says enough to call forth deep melancholy."

This chapter may fitly end with a passage in the *Broadstone of Honour*, breathing all the fresh enthusiasm of youth:

"O thou, my spirit's guide, on the depth of whose deep mysteries my heart would ever gaze! O thou Church most holy of immortal Rome, whose solemn prayers first taught my reason that there was a bright, blessed place hereafter, a heaven beyond the dark foul grave, cheering me every night with dulcet breath and the vision of that peace which the world cannot give, calling me to thy bosom by signs and accents, by smiles and tears, 'a voice like the voice of my own soul,' heard in the stillness of thought in which childhood knew and felt its mother, 'calming me as the loveliness of heaven soothes the unquiet sea,' thou that lovest and sanctifiest all that of which the image will delight my heart.

Dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus.

Youth and innocence and simplicity, and the reverence of early days, all that in this beautiful world is fair and lovely, mountains, woods, rivers, and Ausonian skies, all sweet sounds and gracious harmonies that give a glimpse at nameless joys, such as make an infant smile, or, if eyes needs must weep, as can make 'our tears all wonder and delight'—thou, whose wisdom is as the ocean, from which flowed in narrow streams all that is profound in Plato, all that inspired 'the kings of old philosophy,' whose angelic strains I pray may sound to me in my

last hour—within whose holy walls at eventide priests and innocent children, after their pretty little stately walk in timid order to the sound of richest melody, kneel down in adoration before lighted altars that are decked with flowers and fragrant with sweet incense, where all appear to be 'like forms and sounds of a diviner world, like the bright procession of skiey visions in a solemn dream, from which men wake as from a paradise, and draw new strength to tread the thorns of life'—thou, whose wrongs have roused the weakest and most worthless of thy sons—thou much injured, calumniated guide that wouldest make me all I dream of, happy, high, majestical, that wouldest have me 'love and pity all things,' that wouldest have me cast away all human passions, all revenge, all pride, and think, speak and act no ill—that wouldest 'quench the earth-consuming rage of gold and blood, till men should live and move harmonious as the sacred stars above,' thou that art pure as light, lasting as the world. I salute thee, immortal Mother of learning and grace and sanctity! Salve magna Parens!"

Poetry, men will say who trade in mere prose; but it is poetic truth, that is to say, Reality expressed in poetic language, a variation on the theme of David, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem." The Christian religion is a love affair, and the complete consummation so far as it can be on earth is in or through the Catholic Church. Between mere friendship and love completed there is for him who has once felt the attraction no firm standing ground any more than for the earthly lover in the conception of "Platonic love." Those who have never been real lovers can be friends, but those who have been can hardly fall back upon the line of friendship. If they retreat at all they must retreat much further into the wilderness of uncertainty and doubt.

CHAPTER IV

"THE BROADSTONE OF HONOUR"

"OUR Saviour, Jesus Christ, is become the chief and eternal king of all the really free, generous, and heroic spirits that exist upon the earth. Vidimus et venimus is henceforth the cry of generous chivalry. Procidentes adoraverunt eum."

KENELM DIGBY, *Broadstone of Honour*, "*Godefridus*."

"'WHERE do you wish that we should sit down and read this tale of ancient chivalry?' said one of our company as we walked on a spring morning through the delicious groves that clothe those mountains of Dauphiny which surround the old castle of the family of Bayard. We proposed to turn aside along the banks of the stream, and there sit down in peace. We were all familiar with Plato, and that spot reminded us forcibly of that charming episode where Phaedrus and Socrates are described as congratulating each other on being bare-footed, that they may walk through the water; and our light and careless livery was no impediment to our march to the opposite shore, though the stream was rapid and of considerable depth. Upon the opposite bank we found a lofty chestnut with wide-spreading branches, and beneath it was soft grass and a gentle breeze; and there we sat down; near it were shrubs which formed a dense and lovely thicket; and many of them bearing now a full blossom, the whole place was most fragrant; there was a fountain also under the chestnut, clear and cold, as our feet bore witness; and that nothing might be wanting to remind us of those banks of the Ilissus described by Plato, there were some

statues from which the ancients would have supposed that here too was a spot sacred to the Nymphs and to Achelaus. But our Ilissus possessed objects of a higher interest than the memorials of Boreas and Orithyia ; for within a few hundred yards of the spot where we sat, lower down the bank, there was an altar and a rustic chapel, embowered in arbutus, where, in the summer season, a priest from the neighbouring monastery used to repair to say the holy mass, and to instruct the shepherd youth who had to watch the flocks during these months in places remote from any habitations of men. Who could describe with what refreshing and delicious sweetness the gentle breeze cooled our temples ! The summer song of the cicadae had already begun to resound in sweet chorus ; the grass was most beautiful and rich with varied flowers. Chaucer used to say, at dawn of day walking in the meadow to see these blossoms spread against the sun was a blissful sight, which softened all his sorrow. From this enamelled bank, promising to receive so gently the reclining head, we could discern across the river the grey ruins of that majestic castle which recalled so many images of the older time, and which was distinguished by a name so peculiarly dear to chivalry that it seemed symbolical of the very bent of honour. It was here, then, that we began to read aloud from a certain romantic volume which first inspired me with the desire to study the counsels and to retrace the deeds of chivalry." [1]

If the inspiring conception of Kenelm Digby's first book took place in pastoral Dauphiny, its title flashed upon him, he says, when he saw the ruined castle of Ehrenbreitstein, on the opposite bank of the Rhine to the ancient city of Coblentz. Ehrenbreitstein means, in English, " Broadstone of Honour."

Digby wrote at Cambridge, and published in 1822, two

[1] *The Broadstone of Honour, " Godefridus,"* chapter i.

parts of the book to which he gave this fine name, those called Godefridus and Tancredus, after the crusading chiefs. He describes in the *Temple of Memory* how eagerly he used to await in Trumpington Street the advent of the mail-coach bringing down his proof-sheets from the printers in London. The youthful work was well received, and a second edition came out in 1823.

The Broadstone of Honour, or "the true sense and practice of Chivalry," was a book like Newman's *Essay on Development*, or Hugh Benson's *By What Authority*, which completed or accompanied the conversion of the author to the Catholic Church. After his conversion in 1825 Kenelm Digby was dissatisfied with his book, bought up all the copies he could, and in 1826 published a new *Broadstone*, much enlarged. His old Cambridge teacher, Julius Hare, wrote in his *Guesses at Truth*, shortly before the appearance of the 1826 edition, some high praise, not too high, of the original *Broadstone*. He is speaking of—

"that wisdom of the heart, that *esprit du cœur*, or *mens cordis*, which the *Broadstone of Honour* inculcates so eloquently, and so fervently, and which, if it be severed from the wisdom of the head, is far the more precious of the two; while, in their union it is like the odour which in some indescribable way mingles with the hues of the flower, softening its beauty into loveliness. No truly wise man has ever been without it; but in few has it ever been found in such purity and perfection, as in the author of that noble manual for gentlemen, that volume which, had I a son, I would place in his hands, charging him, though such prompting would be needless, to love it next to his Bible."

Could there be higher compliment? But after Digby had published the revised and enlarged edition in 1826,

the Rector, as Hare had become, of Hurstmonceaux could not express such unqualified admiration. He wrote, in a later criticism : [1]

" To this new edition, I regret to say, I cannot apply the same terms. Not that it is inferior to the former in its peculiar excellences. On the contrary, the author's style, both in language and thought, has become more mature, and still more beautiful ; his reading has been continually widening its range ; and he pours forth its precious stores still more prodigally ; and the religious spirit which permeated the former work, hallows every page of the latter. The new *Broadstone* is still richer than the old one in magnanimous and holy thoughts, and in tales of honour and piety. If one sometimes thinks that the author loses himself amid the throng of knightly and saintly personages whom he calls up before us, it is with the feeling with which Milton must have regarded the moon, when he likened her to ' one that had been led astray through the heaven's wide pathless way.' If he strays it is ' through the heaven's wide pathless way ' ; if he loses himself it is among the stars. In truth this is an essential and a very remarkable feature of his catholic spirit. He identifies himself, as few have ever done, with the good, and great, and heroic, and holy, in former times, and ever rejoices in passing out of himself into them ; he loves to utter his thoughts and feelings in their words rather than in his own ; and the saints and philosophers and warriors of old join in swelling the sacred concert which rises heavenward from his pages."

Who, after reading these glowing words, would not wish to plunge into the pages of the *Broadstone* ? But the cautious and responsible Archdeacon and Rector of Hurstmonceaux, fighting against himself, adds :

[1] *Guesses at Truth*, 15th series, p. 233.

" Nevertheless the new *Broadstone of Honour* is not a book which can be recommended without hesitation to the young. The very charm, which it is sure to exercise over them, heightens one's scruples about doing so. For in it the author has come forward as a convert and champion of the Roman Church, and as the implacable enemy of Protestantism."

Hare goes on to make the criticism that Digby, while gloriously producing the noblest and most beautiful side of the mediaeval period, has dwelt little on the darker side, while on the other hand he has depicted, for choice, the indefensible aspects of the Protestant Reformation, and the most unpleasing aspect of its consequences in modern times. This process, Julius Hare said, was pursued still further in Digby's later work, the *Mores Catholici,* or *Ages of Faith.*

" I trust," he concludes, " that nothing I have said will hurt the feelings of one, who fulfils, as very few men have fulfilled, the idea his writings give of their author, and whom I esteem it a blessed privilege to be allowed to number among my friends."

This " guess at truth " was written in 1837, before the full efflorescence of the Oxford Movement. Ten years later, in 1847, Julius Hare, alarmed by the Rome-ward progress, wrote, in a further series of *Guesses,* a note on Digby's works in a much more hostile and damnatory spirit.

Five years earlier, in 1842, Julius Hare had written two painful private letters to Digby, with reference to the last published volumes of *Mores Catholici.* He charged Digby with what he called, most incorrectly, " virulent bigotry."

"I do not," he wrote, "complain much of any exaggeration that there may be in your praises of your favourites; I love to see admiration and love, even in their excess. But when you come to speak of still greater and wiser, and as holy and godly, men, of men raised up by God for the grandest work which has been performed since the first diffusion of Christianity, the greatest benefactors of mankind since the holy Apostles—alas! I can only feel deep sorrow and indignation at the manner in which you calumniate them. My own earnest desire and prayer always is that I may never speak ill unjustly of any man. I should rejoice to recognise all that is good and great in Hildebrand, in Innocent, in Becket. But at the same time I would claim that Luther and Calvin shall not be slandered and belied, that single expressions shall not be picked out and often greatly misrepresented and distorted into heinous offences. Luther is the man to whom I feel that I myself, and that the whole world owes more than to any man since St. Paul. And such a man, my own great and beloved benefactor, I cannot patiently allow to be traduced."

Julius Hare's criticism that, in the *Broadstone of Honour* and the *Mores Catholici*, Kenelm Digby depicts the beautiful and passes over the reverse side of mediaeval life and religion, has a certain justification. But a writer should be judged according to his professed aims. Kenelm Digby never pretended to be a judicial, scientific historian like the German Ranke, or the French Guizot, exactly weighing with cold deliberation the merits and demerits of men and times, but rather as an advocate who wished to set forth the good of his cause. For nearly three centuries in England nothing had been written, except timidly, though rather effectively, by some cautious antiquaries, nothing at least had been

written by any dominant guide of opinion, which did not treat the Middle Ages as barbarous and hold up in an odious light the Church which has everywhere its circumference but its visible centre in Rome. Except by a few obscure and unheeded writers, all that was in the nature of abuses had been exhibited with monstrous distortion and exaggeration to the English, and all that was good had been almost entirely suppressed.[1] It was full time that the other side of things should be represented by some one who was deeply instructed and knew how to write.

Digby, then, dwells, and rightly, far more upon the heroic virtues of the "ages of faith" than upon the vices which have no doubt existed, more or less, in the Catholic Church from the days in which Tertullian denounced them two centuries after Christ, but it is not true to say that he ignored them altogether. Look, for instance, at this passage, and many others might be quoted, in the volume of *Mores Catholici* which was published in 1835. It was read by Julius Hare before he published his criticism of 1837. Digby says :

"Much, I am aware, remains to be said respecting the vices which desolated society during the Ages of Faith. Great and beyond all description were the calamities of the city of God, when those two luminaries and immortal columns of the Church, Dominick and Francis, came into the world. As the historian of the Minors observes, 'the demon having persecuted the infant Church by tyrants, and the more advanced by heretics, endeavoured now to oppress with both the joyful and flourishing Church, afflicting it with horrors

[1] One might perhaps add Walter Scott as a pro-Catholic influence but that he was always so very careful to dilute his wine of Catholic sentiment with cold Protestant water.

on all sides, perils of the sword without, heresies within, and the iniquity of corrupt manners.' But then," says Digby, "historians of all ages, like modern newspapers, are more inclined to record deeds of violence and sin than to record quiet virtues, of which yet we can know if we search the humble and not the most ostentatiously striking of popular records.

"Who can estimate the multitude of the golden angelic souls, candid, puerile, and at the same time profound, to which the Middle Ages gave birth, and which passed without observation, or leaving behind in history any vestige or memorial of their transit? It was enough for the just that their death was precious in the sight of God, and that their lot was amongst the saints."

In the volume of *Mores Catholici* which was published in 1842 Kenelm Digby replies at some length to the criticisms made by Julius Hare on the earlier part of that book and on *The Broadstone of Honour*.

"In answer," he says, "to this accomplished scholar who would convict me of being a false spy, I must declare that in no part of these books have I set up noblest stories culled out of fifteen centuries, as the whole picture of what the Ages of Faith actually were. Their faults and crimes were not concealed or palliated, though their devotion led me to the conclusion at which a French historian (Ozanam) has arrived, that much will be forgiven them on account of their having loved much, a conviction which will not be treated with disdain by those who remember that, as St. Augustine says, 'The Apostles were defeated by the robber who then believed when they failed.' If their iniquities were great, great also was their reparation, great their struggle to correct themselves, great their repentance. Yet with all their defects, such is the contrast they present to heathen times, that the anticipations of the

first apologists seem so far verified as to force the ridicule of Gibbon to recoil upon himself, for what Lactantius expected, and almost ventured to promise, did arrive. Ages of comparative innocence and felicity did return; the worship of the true God did moderate war and dissension among those who mutually considered themselves as children of a common parent. Impure desires, angry and selfish passions, were restrained by the knowledge of the gospel, and in many places the magistrates might sheathe the sword of justice among a people actuated by the sentiments of truth and piety, of equity and moderation, of harmony and universal love.

"... Neither is it just to say that I have culled these stories as if rare passages from ancient books; for whoever has pursued studies of this kind must be aware that the difficulty arises from the infinite multiplicity rather than from the deficiency of such evidence."

He denies also that he has failed to see what is good in the modern age, although he never ceases to desire that to this goodness might be added the happiness and peace and mental security given by the Catholic Church, and given by it to many even here in England where conditions are so adverse. And he adds—

"there are, besides, other lands where still faith is found fruitful. Beneath Ausonian skies all these deeds of love are practised, and Catholic manners as of old; and this I know to be so true, from what I saw and heard, that, in this distance of years, long separated, I feel that there is danger of mistaking Italy for heaven."

Those who point rather to the crimes and barbarities of the Middle Ages than to the virtues, are apt to forget what a fearful task it was to bring order out of chaos, and to subdue to the yoke of Christ, even in some degree,

the wild passions of the youthful vigorous tribes who invaded and conquered the decadent Roman Empire. It is far more surprising that the Catholic Church effected so much than that it effected so little. The immense mass of quoted evidence which Digby brought together in his three chief works, *The Broadstone of Honour*, *Mores Catholici*, and *Compitum*, to prove the good side of the Catholic Church throughout its history, is certainly, at least, sufficient to rebut the charge that he made up a case with straining endeavour. There can be no doubt that his work was needed. Consider the education which the English people had received in these matters for three hundred years—the positive teaching, as well as the negative teaching given by the destruction of all the signs and symbols of the old religion. One of the sixteenth-century "Homilies" which were authorised documents of the national reformed Church says (and it is quite "the limit"):[1]

"In this pit of damnable idolatry all the world, as it were, drowned, continued until our age by the space of above eight hundred years . . . so that laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sects, and degrees of men, women and children of whole Christendom (an horrible and most dreadful thing to think) have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry, of all other vices most detested of God, and most damnable to man."

This strange teaching, "a horrible and dreadful thing to think," indeed, was enforced and carried out in

[1] The Elizabethan article 35 directs that the Homilies, which, it says, "contain a godly and wholesome doctrine and necessary for these times," should be "read in Churches by the ministers, diligently and distinctly, that they may be understanded of the people." It was a Government operation through the pulpit, the 'Press' of those times.

practice, and in England and other reformed countries a devastating assault was made, not only upon the unity of the Church, but upon the joy and grace and tenderness of religion.

"Only just think," wrote John Ruskin, "of the sudden abrogation of all beloved custom and believed tradition, all that had been closest to the hearts of men or most precious for their help, faiths that had ruled the destiny and sealed the departure of souls that could not be told or numbered for multitude; prayers that from the lips of mothers to those of children had distilled like sweet waterfalls, sounding through the silence of ages; hopes that had pointed the purposes and ministered the strength of life, brightened the last glances and shaped the last syllables of death; charities that had woven chains of pitying or aspiring communion between the world and the unfathomable beneath and above; and, more than these, the spirits of all the innumerable, undoubting dead, beckoning to the one way by which they had been content to follow the things that belonged to their peace."

Finely said—although this great sensitive writer, swayed by contending influences, did not, as Digby remarks, draw "the natural conclusion."[1] Perhaps, indeed, the "abrogation" was not so sudden as all that, but by the beginning of the eighteenth century

[1] Ruskin, it is fair to note, says in *Modern Painters* (part v. ch. 19) that "Modern Romanism is as different from thirteenth-century Romanism as a prison from a prince's chamber," and he often throws out observations of this bitter kind. He seems to base his judgments too much upon the infidelities and transformations of the Fine Arts and intellectualists, and to have inadequate knowledge of the actual men and women of the Catholic world in modern times. He was brought up in a narrow sect of Protestantism, and then fell under the dominion of a stronger and more masculine intellect, the Calvinist-bred Thomas Carlyle.

it was very complete, except where the old religion lingered here and there in its integrity. It has now, happily, become almost incredible how the damnatory view was rammed into the popular mind by the Scribes and Pharisees. This was the tone of the popular Press and far the greater part of the Reformed Pulpit. Even "High Churchmen" joined in the chorus. The non-juror, Dr. Brett, in Anne's reign, informed his readers that the rubrics of the Roman Missal were "corrupt, dangerous, idolatrous, and utterly unworthy of the gravity of so sacred an Institution." The total exclusion of Catholics from all national services unless they would publicly deny the distinctive doctrines of their religion, much enforced this teaching in the popular imagination. It was felt that men could not possibly be treated like this unless they deserved it.

The voice of Catholic writers and apologists was hardly heard at all. In the earlier half of the eighteenth century Catholics had been so thoroughly oppressed and cowed that their attitude was timid in the extreme. So Challoner, in his book about the heroic English Catholic martyrs, prefaced that he published it "only as a supplement to English history, that might give pleasure to men of all persuasions who desire to read of the lives and the deaths even of the most notorious malefactors, presenting it without any pretension to make panegyrics of any of them, or to act the apologist, but only narrating them as a historian." Probably unless he had given this explanation no one would have ventured to print his volume.

It is precisely because the invincibly ignorant, anti-Catholic prejudice largely declined in the nineteenth century, partly through the labours of Kenelm Digby,

that these labours now seem less necessary. Yet the feeling still smoulders in many corners, and perhaps, on the whole, has not so much disappeared as subsided into silent and latent antipathy.

The truest view seems to be that this long period to which is given the name of "Middle Ages," extending for a thousand years from the fall of the Roman Empire to the fifteenth century or thereabouts, was a blend in faith and morals of that which is good and true from the beginning, now, and for ever, and that, also, which was part of the intellectual and moral childhood of the new European races. Those erred, perhaps, a little, who would not sift the eternal from the temporary, but those erred far more who would not leave both together to grow till the coming of the Lord of the harvest, and violently rooted up the wheat with the weeds and wild flowers. Digby never dwells upon, though he never assails, miraculous incidents rather deficient in evidence, or more or less mythical stories of the Lives of Saints, stories that were, as de Maistre says, rather dramatized truth than verified facts. What he does is to show by most ample evidence the deeper and holier and essential thought of the Mediaevals, and its incarnation in their practice; to trace the lines which connected this thought, or "ethos," with that of the best pre-Christian thinkers and poets, and the best of the Catholic, or even non-Catholic, Moderns, and to show how the Catholic religion flowering, with whatever incidental faults, most freely, visibly and beautifully in the "Ages of Faith," was, and is, and ever will be in harmony, if rightly understood, with all purest joys, and profoundest instincts, and noblest activities of life. Like Milton's philosophy, and far more truly, the Catholic Church is

" not harsh or crabbéd as dull fools suppose, but musical as is Apollo's lute." [1]

Chateaubriand, when he wrote the *Genius of Christianity*, held, like Digby, the belief that the time had come when the old scholastic methods, however sound in themselves, were no longer of practical avail against antagonists who refused to accept the elementary assumptions of the faith and the sacred texts from which they were deduced, and that the Christian religion and the Catholic Church must now be justified by its good fruits in making men better and happier, and inspiring life in all its provinces with the spirit of sincerity, generosity, chivalry, justice, beauty and charity. The defenders of religion of the eighteenth-century school did not perceive, he says, that "it was no longer a question of discussing this or that doctrine, since the foundations were absolutely rejected. Speaking of the mission of Jesus, and proceeding from consequence to consequence, they established no doubt very solidly the truths of the faith, but this way of arguing, good for the seventeenth century, when the foundation was not contested, was no longer of any use in our days. It was necessary to take the contrary road, to pass from the effect to the cause; not to prove that Christianity was excellent because it comes from God, but that it comes from God because it is excellent."

The *Génie* and Digby's works were good answer to Voltaire and Gibbon and their company, who alleged

[1] Montalembert says (*Monks of the West*, Book xii.): "The fact is that in true history there is no 'golden age.' All ages, without exception, are infected by the evil which proceeds from man's natural corruption. All bear witness to his incurable weakness, but at the same time all proclaim his greatness and freedom, as well as the justice and mercy of God, his maker and redeemer."

or suggested that the Christian and Catholic Religion was a decadence and product of darkness and barbarism, but the more modern attack is different. It is said that Christianity is a stage in evolution, and Catholicism a stage in the evolution of Christianity; that the phase of things denoted by these words was inevitable but transient, and has passed, or is passing, away. What is the reply? The distinction between the eternal and the transitory, the admission that in the religion itself there are some things which, gently and slowly, pass away with the flowing stream of time, and others that stand fast like the walls and towers of Zion.

This truth was known to the men of old. Vincent de Lerins, before A.D. 450, asks:

"Shall there then be no progress (*profectus*) in the Church of Christ?" and answers, "There shall be progress, and even the greatest progress, for who would be so envious of the good of men, or so cursed of God, as to prevent it? But it will be progress and not change. With the growth of the ages and centuries, there must necessarily be a growth of understanding, of wisdom, and of knowledge, for each man as for all the Church. But the religion of souls must imitate the progress of the human form, which in developing and growing with years, never ceases to be the same in the maturity of age as in the flower of youth."

It must be repeated—for this is important—that, when Digby began to write, the English public had hardly heard anything except attacks for near three centuries upon papistry, superstition and monasticism, and had been fed with every story upon that side of the account. There were as yet none of those later attempts to restore,

without submission to the Apostolic See, the Catholic cult and spirit. For a hundred years and more, since the fall of the seventeenth-century High Churchmen, the tide had been flowing entirely in the opposite direction. Additional criticism of the Catholic Church, either in the past or the present, was at that date quite superfluous. What was needed, to restore the balance, was a strong defence of Catholic principles, and a record of innumerable and forgotten good fruits of them, supported by solid evidence, and by a very great deal of it. This work was done by Kenelm Digby with results in the way of modification of English opinion, and correction of English ignorance upon this subject, which have rarely been credited to this almost forgotten author.

In his much later book, *Evenings on the Thames*, published in 1864, Kenelm Digby has some observations upon the danger of too zealous pursuit of "systems." He quotes the French writer, de Sacy, who says, with regard to the fall of the once ultramontane Lamennais, "Beware of systems," and who adds: "It would have been eventually better for Lamennais had he from the first been one of those poor Gallicans whom he pursued so fiercely and so unmercifully, and who, for all their views, were ready, as events proved, to suffer death any day rather than violate their fidelity to the Holy See." Digby agrees, although he was himself more in sympathy with ultramontane than with Gallican ideals, and remarks:

"In questions of history, too, there is the same necessity for avoiding systems, though some that I need not name [himself he means] may have been rather hastily accused of having fallen into that pit, as if they

had given out the Middle Ages for the uninterrupted reign of peace and charity upon earth, which they really never did, or at least meant to do, having in fact at no time any system in their heads which required for its support such an idle sacrifice of historical truth." [1]

One can readily believe this, for surely no writer was ever more the reverse of systematic than Kenelm Digby. The Catholic Church, as Pascal says of 'Nature,' "has perfections to show that she is the image of God, and defects, in order to show that she is only his image." One can lay more stress upon the perfections without being a system-maker.

The Broadstone of Honour (to return from this digression), as revised, extended, and published in 1826, appeared in a new edition in 1828, and in another, appearing in four separate parts, between 1844 and 1848. A handsome edition in five volumes of 550 copies was printed by Mr. Quaritch, on his own initiative, in 1877, three years before Kenelm Digby died, and then sold very slowly. The romantic movement of the age-spirit, strong in England, France and Germany during the first half of the nineteenth century, had died away, and natural science and the idea of evolution and continual automatic progress from the worse to the better were now dominant. But this scientific tide touched high-water mark towards the close of the nineteenth century, and has since been ebbing, and men may be more willing to turn again now, with a difference, to the side of life of which Kenelm Digby was an exponent. Generosity, sweetness, humility, peace of heart and mind, unambitious simplicity, obedience and

[1] Chap. xvii.

loyalty in religion and social life, beauty and reverence in manners and in worship, chivalrous treatment of opponents, realized unity through membership of a visible and organic Church common to all and diffused throughout all nations—it is possible that before long ideas of this kind will appeal far more strongly to men and women than they did in the nineteenth century.

The Broadstone of Honour consists of four parts, named respectively *Godefridus*, *Tancredus*, *Morus*, and *Orlandus*. The first two are so named after the heroes of the Crusades, the third after the Catholic martyr, Sir Thomas More. The main object of the book is to describe the heroic and chivalrous spirit, intimately bound up with the religious faith, as it appeared in the Middle Ages. But in *Morus* and in part of *Orlandus* are stated those undeniable facts about the Protestant Revolution in England, and on the Continent, the public exhibition of which gave so much offence to the excellent Rector of Hurstmonceaux. In one of his latest works, written when he was over seventy, Digby admits that in his youth he wrote things in religious controversy possibly too wounding to others, and expressed more strongly than he would have expressed them in old age. This is a very common reflection in old age concerning ardent and intolerant youth, which has the defects of its qualities. All the same, in England, in these days, it is well to be definite and lucid in order to avoid misinterpretation. From his early youth till the end of his very long life Kenelm Digby never wavered for one moment in his definition of the Catholic Church. It is, for him, that religious society existing throughout the world, of unbroken historic continuity, and consisting of people of all nations and languages, which is visibly,

avowedly, and organically connected with the central Apostolic See at Rome, and it is nothing either more or less than this. In his eyes this society was identical with the Catholic Church to which his favourite author St. Augustine of Africa was converted, or re-converted. Digby was as willing as St. Augustine to admit and praise that which was good in individual character outside this one Catholic Church, nor for a moment would he have said that the moral division between good and bad coincided, or had ever anything like coincided, with the division between Catholic and non-Catholic people, although he did believe that the former, however imperfectly, followed true central principles, and that the latter were good notwithstanding that they followed untrue, or only partially true, principles. He never admitted the assertion made by some moderns that the Catholic Church consists of "all who profess and call themselves Christians," or the more exclusive assertion made by other moderns that it consists of an imagined combination of certain Churches having properly descended episcopal institutions.

The Broadstone of Honour is a book alive with all the noble virtues of youth. It might, perhaps, even now, if republished, be more popular than Digby's other works, for it is written in a style which is more vigorous and concentrated and has more movement in it. He had not yet fully developed the use, not constant indeed but frequent, of those very long and parenthetic sentences which, though common in the great writers of Christian antiquity, and in those of the seventeenth century such as Milton, and Clarendon, and Hooker, and Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, had been abandoned in the nineteenth century by almost every writer except

ohn Ruskin in his earlier works, who undoubtedly modelled his flowing style on Hooker. There is a certain affinity between the earlier Digby and the earlier Ruskin, although Ruskin is the greater stylist. Neither of them could write verse really well, although both copiously essayed to do so. The reason is that poetry is the opposite to oratorical eloquence. Its essence is concentration and speed, the saying as much as possible in the fewest words, and both Ruskin and Digby were naturally diffuse. They both were writers of poetic prose, and ardent handlers of the pencil and paint-brush. In their way of looking at things there was also, with all their differences, much resemblance between them, and no doubt the thoughts and books of Digby, who was the older by twenty years, influenced Ruskin.

Digby much admired and very often quotes Ruskin in his later works, and Ruskin in all his voluminous writings makes one single but remarkable reference to Digby. It is in *Modern Painters*, in the section, entitled "Vulgarity," in which he very finely analyses the character of the "gentleman," and distinguishes it from that of the "vulgar" man.[1] He says in a footnote, "the reader will find every phase of nobleness illustrated in Kenelm Digby's *Broadstone of Honour*. The best help I have ever had—so far as help depended on the sympathy or praise of others in work which, year after year, it was necessary to pursue through the abuse of the brutal and the base—was given me, when this author, from whom I had first learned to love nobleness, introduced frequent reference to my own writings in his *Children's Bower*."

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. v. chap. ix.

Perhaps Digby's titles, the *Lover's Seat*, the *Chapel of St. John*, the *Children's Bower*, suggested to Ruskin the charming titles of his own later minor publications. The *Children's Bower* and the *Chapel of St. John* should have been enough to convince Ruskin that the religion which had inspired Dante and Fra Angelico and Giotto and Bellini was not, as he and Carlyle seem to suppose, dead long ago, but, although older and therefore not the same superficially, was still alive, true to type, and producing its good and noble fruit as ever in the lives of men and women and children. Ruskin says, in one passage, that after the Reformation "it was no longer possible to attain entire peace of mind, to live calmly and die hopefully." Hundreds of modern instances quoted by Digby should have shown him the exaggeration of this statement.[1] Meanwhile it is much that Kenelm Digby taught Ruskin to "love nobleness," a lesson which this disciple taught again in his excellent writings to the English-speaking world, of whom some received the word gladly, while in others the seed went the divers ways of the seed in the Parable.

The Broadstone of Honour shows a range of reading astonishing in one who was so young as Kenelm Digby when he wrote it. It is true that he had neglected the regular school and university course of education, and such neglect is an immense economy of time, provided that the time so saved is well employed. The *Broadstone* is not, though perhaps his most charming, Kenelm Digby's greatest work. It is his *Mores Catholici* that deserves this name. *The Broadstone of Honour* was, however, for reasons peculiar to the time, more popular

[1] In a passage of *Modern Painters*, vol. v. p. 209, Ruskin admits that there are exceptions to his assertion.

when it first appeared than were any of Digby's later works, and for this reason—just as William Law is always connected with his *Serious Call* and not with his later more profound and important writings—so Digby is inseparably connected with the words *Broadstone of Honour*. Few, I am afraid, now living have read this book, but many who have not even heard of any of his later and riper writings vaguely connect its title with the name of Kenelm Digby.

One tribute to *The Broadstone of Honour* must have given special pleasure to Digby. Father Scott, the Jesuit who had received him into the Church three years earlier, wrote to him about the volume called *Morus*, the volume which so much displeased Julius Hare. "I assure you that I never perused a book with so much pleasure as I did yours, and was quite astonished at the immense learning displayed in almost every page."

Charles Butler, the lawyer, wrote to Digby that the *Broadstone* was "excellently calculated to serve the cause of honour, Christianity and the Catholic religion," and added: "I desired Colonel Stonor, my son-in-law, to give it to Alban, his son, as the very best book he could possibly place in his hands. Such I really consider it." This praise from a man of sound and solid learning, practical knowledge of the world, and very moderate temper, and unprejudiced way of thinking, was really worth much.

CHAPTER V

ENGLISH AND FRENCH SOCIETY

"O, SUN and dulcet air of brilliant France,
What heart will beat that thou canst not entrance ?
Oh yes ! thou dost possess a potent spell ;.
Though what it is exactly, I can't tell."

KENELM DIGBY, *Temple of Memory.*

THE *Broadstone of Honour* achieved a certain fame at the time of its appearance. It was even seen by a friend of Digby lying upon the table of the dignified Dr. Coplestone, Head of Oriel College, Oxford, who, questioned as to its contents, replied, "The design of the author appears to be to revive the principles of loyalty and generosity which are almost extinct among mankind." The book suited the mood of the time better than his later works suited the mood of Victorian England. It caught the rising tide of romantic reaction which was soon to culminate in the Oxford Movement. Thus Digby's name became known, and, though he did not move, or wish to move, in London intellectual circles, he came across two or three men of note. One was Walter Savage Landor, who lived at Bath from 1836 to 1857. Digby calls Landor an "eloquent and truly fearless Sire,"[1] "thoughtful" and "full of unfeigned and infinite respect for the old Catholic and Roman Church." Landor, says Digby, often contrasted the

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VI.

easy and unaffected "*bonté*"—we have not exactly that word in English—of Catholic priests and bishops with the character of "ministers who followed the new law," and illustrated his contention by tales of his own experiences in Spain and Italy. Landor would sometimes say, with a sigh, that it would be well for himself if he could die like a good Catholic.

Certainly one would not have imagined this vein of sentiment from Landor's writings, the beauty of which is marred by his numerous and bitter attacks on the Catholic priesthood and religion. But men do not always think exactly as they write.

Much as Digby differed in opinions from old Landor, the two men really had something in common. Both were quite fearless and independent in their views, both wrote like gentlemen to please themselves and any one else who might like the results, and not to gratify the tastes or serve the prejudices of the "reading public," and, in consequence, the readers of both were few, though select. Each had an immense range of knowledge in history and literature, so that their books are delightful to those whose tastes lie in those regions. Landor was the greater artist, and wrote with a self-control which did not appear in the management of his own affairs. Digby had an Irish discursiveness and loose texture of style, and wrote as the spirit led him, never able to resist a divagation from the high road of his theme.

Digby also met Wordsworth, "playful though grave," he says, who "when quoting verses almost seemed to rave, so deeply did he feel the truths he sung."[1] Digby found that Wordsworth also was not really averse to

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VI.

the old religion of England. The poet told him that had he lived in an earlier age he himself would have felt the need of and obeyed "that scorned, most ancient creed."

Among English Catholics whom he well knew, Digby mentions his own guide, "the holy saint, revered, wise, Father Scott"; Charles Butler, "skilled in both law and school divinity"; Bishops Poynter and Bramstone; Maguire, whose deep, invincible and strong reasoning, skilled to reply to every question, served to make him rise, "quite far from earth, conversant with the skies." Nicholas Wiseman he also knew, the future Cardinal, and restorer of the Catholic hierarchy in England.

> "Musician, artist, poet, sage, and saint,
> Whom no skilled human hand could justly paint;
> Yielding to none in theologic lore,
> Yet than all schools prosaic knowing more
> Sweet Heaven's great secrets and the heart of man,
> Whose depths mysterious he would ever scan." [1]

In Paris, Kenelm Digby was in touch with a wider and more brilliant circle than in London. There never was better society in Paris than during the thirty years which followed the fall of the first Napoleon. The first half of this period, the fifteen years before the society-dividing Revolution of 1830, was the most pleasing. Under Napoleon there was no free expression of thought. The Restoration of 1814 was a restoration of liberty in thought and action, and it was followed by an outburst of intellectual production.

In his *Temple of Memory* Kenelm Digby enumerates some out of the great number of men who at that time adorned literature, science and art: Chateaubriand, Ozanam, de Bonald, de Maistre, Ségur, Daru, Custine,

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VI.

Michelet, Guizot, Migny, Thierry, Thiers, were names well known in history and political philosophy. There were excellent scholars in Digby's own mediaeval subjects, such as Rochejaquelin, Gallais, Mazas, St. Victor, Guéranger, Fauriel, Marchangy, and others. Bournoulf and Boissonade were mighty scholars in Oriental and Grecian lore. Albert, Prince de Broglie, was both orator and historian. Ballanche and Victor Cousin, Ste. Beuve, Villemain, De Haller and Jules Janin, shone as critics and philosophers. Joubert was a critic of supreme taste. Among the poets were Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Alfred de Vigny, Béranger; among the novelists Dumas, Karr, the young Balzac—

> "Balzac himself had breathed that epoch's air,
> With whom, though later, no one could compare." [1]

Girodet and Gros, Gérard and Ingres, Horace Vernet, Eugène Delacroix, Paul de la Roche were distinguished painters. Never has there been in France, not even under Louis XIV., a more lively and energetic constellation of intellect.

Digby describes some of his own French friends in the *Temple of Memory*. One was the "white-haired" M. Chevalier, who had been secretary to Talleyrand in the days of the Directorate, and had tales of the Revolution, curious or horrible, one of them singularly horrible. Digby knew well the Comte de Montalembert, and Lacordaire, the Dominican, of whom he says, remembering his Conférences at Notre Dame:

> "It is the holy, gentle Lacordaire,
> Whose words of flame did fire my youthful breast,
> In whose remembrance fond my age would rest.

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VII.

For where, oh where else could you ever find
Such neutral tints of thought, so deep and kind,
That while the holy Christians would admire
To hear him speak no sinners e'er would tire,
As if 'twas them he loved on earth the best
And hoped they'd be for ever with the blest." [1]

Among bishops and priests of his acquaintance he mentions Forbin de Janson, the nobly-born and saintly-souled Bishop of Nancy ; Olivier, curé of St. Roch, and afterwards Bishop of Evreux, and Affre, who in 1848 was to be the martyred Archbishop of Paris. With him Kenelm Digby often walked conversing through the old forest of St. Germain. Another great friend of Digby in Paris was Count Peter Yermoloff, a convert to the Catholic from the Russian Church, who told him stories of the persecution of converts by the Russian Government.

Digby frequented the salon of another Russian convert, that woman of strong and solid mind, Madame Swetchine. Here he met men like Lacordaire, Lamartine, Bonetty, Ozanam. One friend of his was Jules Janin, of the French Academy, an excellent writer and student of the eighteenth century. He knew also the historian Michelet, much of whose history he admired, while deploring his bitter anti-Catholic spirit. Michelet indeed felt the charm of Catholicism, though his reasoning condemned it. It gave pleasure to Digby that Michelet once quoted and praised the *Mores Catholici* in a lecture to a great class of students at Paris. Ste. Beuve, Victor Cousin, Guizot and Thierry were also moving in these circles. Kenelm Digby knew also the old Chateaubriand, whom he first beheld at earliest mass at six o'clock in a church of Paris, on the day of St. Ignatius. Afterwards

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VII.

he used sometimes to meet him. Chateaubriand saw in the young Englishman a saddening reflection of his own earlier enthusiasm for the romantic and chivalric side of Catholic life. He told Digby dejectedly that the *Broadstone of Honour* seemed to be a "mere anachronism," only suited to dreaming youth. Words of a man disillusioned by age, firmly though he held to the central faith. He told Digby that he mistook his own Age, and that now it was not possible to paint Faith and Honour, the theme agreed so little with its demands, and so little he feared with that which a later generation would require. Chateaubriand, at last so infirm that he had to be daily carried up into the salon of the now blind Madame de Récamier, lived just long enough to hear the cannon of June, 1848, and then ended his insatiable and never-satisfied life. Forty years earlier he had been the most brilliant Genius and she the chief Beauty of France. Chateaubriand in his later years was overwhelmed by the *ennui* and melancholy which had always been the foundation of his character. He saw the romantic movement which he had led under the Empire fading away in the utilitarian age of common sense. When he was ambassador in London in 1822 he wrote:

"Burke retint la politique de l'Angleterre dans le passé; Walter Scott refoula les Anglais jusqu'au moyen âge; tout ce qu'on écrivit, fabriqua, bâtit, fut gothique; livres, meubles, maisons, églises, châteaux. Mais les lords de la Grande Charte sont aujourd'hui les fashionables de Bond street, race frivole qui campe dans les manoirs antiques, en attendant l'arrivée des générations nouvelles qui s'apprêtent à les en chasser." [1]

[1] *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe.*

Christian and Catholic—this Chateaubriand became more and more profoundly, but from all enthusiasms, to attempt to revive the Past among them, he returned. "Voici ce qui m'est arrivé," he wrote in 1841, in his old age. "Voici ce qui m'est arrivé; de mes projets, de mes études, de mes expériences, il ne m'est resté qu'un détromper complet de toutes les choses que poursuit le monde. Ma conviction religieuse, en grandissant, a dévoré mes autres convictions; il n'est ici-bas Chrétien plus croyant et homme plus incrédule que moi." [1] At this stage Chateaubriand was when Kenelm Digby talked to him in Paris, and one can well understand the feeling with which he saw the enthusiastic young Englishman who stood where he himself had been for a brief space. No race is more free from illusions than the French, and no Frenchman was ever more free from illusions than the sincere and noble-minded Chateaubriand. Kenelm Digby himself, as he grew older, was, like most of us, a little disenchanted, and he certainly learned, since few people would read or notice his later books, that, as Chateaubriand had warned him, he was writing for an Age almost deaf to his appeal. Tasso says in one of his wonderful sonnets:

"The Chief I sang and the arms which, moved by piety, tore away from impious folk the sacred land in which Christ suffered death and made immortal our humanity; and so clear was the sound that this Age returned to admire the ancient honour, but my song drove neither foot nor horse to camp beyond the Taurus, beyond the Euphrates. Nor know I whether it caught up to heaven beautiful spirits, but often he who heard my notes coloured with pious affection. Me then

[1] *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe.*

certainly my song bore away, and some word from heaven inspired me, or a muse, or other goddess: Ah! may it ever inspire me, and fill my breast with itself."

So Chateaubriand for a brief space had made France return to the thought of religion and chivalry, and so, in a less degree, had Digby touched some hearts in England, but the influence died away before the modern rush of other ideas and aims. And yet the influence did not die, but streamed on in a narrower channel, and will, we may trust, yet again, confined between less steep and rocky banks, expand into a wide and noble river.

Ste. Beuve remarks that the great literary movement which followed the restoration of the French Monarchy in 1815 was the result of a Catholic and Chivalrous reaction.

"It has often been observed," he says, "that a striking disaccordance exists between the advanced political principles of certain men and their literary principles obstinately fixed. The Liberals and Republicans have always shown themselves as strictly classic in literary theory, while from their opponents have come the poetical innovations and the brilliant and successful audacity."

Perhaps man instinctively feels that he cannot let himself go free in all directions at once. Thus those who hold the ancient faith may be the most adventurous in other directions.

The Comte de Montalembert was a true friend of Digby. When the fifth volume of *Mores Catholici* appeared in 1834, he wrote, on Christmas Eve, in English:

"I have been reading your fifth Book with the most heartfelt delight in a place well worthy of such a lecture, in the newly established Monastery of Solesmes. Accept my best thanks for such a noble homage to our faith and our glories."

When Montalembert was kept in Paris by his last illness Digby, visiting him, said that he hoped next time to find him in the country. "Dites dans ma vraie patrie—'tis there alone I wish to go," said Montalembert. Another friend throughout life was the Comte d'Esgrigny, at whose Breton château Digby often stayed. Another was the Marquis de Montaigu of La Bretesche, in the same region.

"In whose proud castle he could often feel
At home, as perfect ease would quite reveal,
Amidst a circle beautiful and gay
In which a month would seem a summer's day,
While to them both alike he then did owe
His thorough knowledge of the French château,
Most sweet remembrance, like a potent charm
To chase all foolish thoughts which mortals harm;
In fact a kind of close initiation
Into the noble manners of a nation,
That, while to all the graces ever given,
Has never lost in fine the thought of Heaven." [1]

Digby says elsewhere that in this Restoration period one could see in France the Christian family in its perfection, free from domestic quarrels, dignified, cheerful and peaceful, entirely devoid of affectation, pride and ambition.

"Such were the manners of the French château,
Provincial nobles to the last were so,
As when at Klin near Guérand he once knew
The kind Du Minchys, and their portraits drew.

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VI.

For many were the types it offered there,
The sons so courteous, and the daughters fair,
And fair with that inimitable grace
In which no consciousness of art you trace ;
The matrons worthy of your veneration,
And yet so gay you felt but admiration ;
The father loving country life so well,
Content with goodness ever there to dwell." [1]

Nothing, perhaps, is better in the way of mankind than a French gentleman who is also a true Christian.

Kenelm Digby married in 1834 (as will be told in a future chapter) a wife intimately connected, although not French but Irish, with the Catholic and Royalist Society of France. She spoke French with perfection and grace. The rooms which they had at different times in Paris, down to the year 1848, at 22 Rue de la Ville L'Evêque, at the Rond Point of the Champs Elysées, in the Place Vendôme, and in the Rue Tronchet, became a resort of many friends. His wife would not have thought of herself as having a "salon," and yet says Kenelm Digby :

"She could not, while in Paris, prevent people from being attracted by goodness of heart and nobleness of soul. There was then the natural foundation of a true salon, which springs up of itself, and is the result of habit, and not of prèmeditation. Though she did not seek the pleasure of great receptions, no one, in an innocent way, enjoyed them more. Her mind and manners, though perfectly natural as belonged to her condition, had a certain vivacity which was ever restrained by an exquisite politeness always negligent and always distinguished. Her drawing-room was neither a narrow conventicle, nor a literary coterie, nor a philosophical school, nor a political circle, nor a worldly

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VII.

assembly. Excepting as far as politeness required she seemed anxious to be unregarded herself, and to draw out others. It was her object, through kindness to her guests, always in her own house to have the conversation kept up, but never to engross it. She was the soul of the company, not their doctor or their patroness. Her house, at other times, solely in consequence of her own influence, was leisure, recovery of health, freedom for all, gaiety for some, reverie and calm study for others. Her evening receptions did not differ much from those of a protracted visit of days; for every one felt quite at home, and at ease, and comfortable and secure, where she presided. She would always have her table elegantly, but not expensively maintained, and she liked to have her rooms brilliant with lamps and tapers." [1]

English women are often too shy and self-conscious to be the best kind of hostess, and French women are sometimes too sparkling and clever. Perhaps no one can be the soul of a pleasant and easy social circle so well as an Irish woman with a French education.

"Disputes in her society," says Digby, "were left to die out of themselves, and that was quickly. . . . Hers was the tone of that kind of society in which there is nothing sharp or cutting; no collisions, no noise. . . . However there were shades to come over even her innocent brightness; so true it is that to whatever shelter one flies, no one here below can pass his life in absolute peace and repose. Political debates would creep in imperceptibly. Accustomed and willing to hear discussed the dearest prospects of England along with those of Christianity, she recoiled from the vain turmoil of mere earthly complications, and in Paris she was to be fatigued by the conflict, when her best friends were

[1] *Chapel of St. John*, p. 137.

defending, step by step, that alluvial soil regained by the house of Bourbon from the revolution of 1789."

At that time Conservative people used to talk of *la Liberté* as if agreeing with Jules Janin, who said of it, "C'est un gros homme en tilbury." Mrs. Digby was condemned to hear oftener than she liked of Chambers and ministers, of journals and new pamphlets. Even in those quiet salons people at that time used to feel uneasy about the *émeute*.

"They used to ask, 'What day will be the next revolution? Will there be scaffolds, or will pillage content them?' At last events arrived to verify many fears, but of these disasters, which profoundly affected her, for she shed tears when she heard the Republic proclaimed beneath her window, it is not necessary for me to speak. But while all the divisions, all the struggles which preceded the revolution of '48, had living echoes in her drawing-room, where the graver events of 1830 had left a poignant memory, her society presented an asylum of comparative peace and cheerfulness which was not easily found elsewhere. She could accommodate herself to the most opposite characters, detect the good side in each, and excuse what was weak. People that would never have met elsewhere found a point of union with her company, and she would never suffer any one, however less agreeable to others, to leave her presence slighted or discouraged."[1]

This could not easily be achieved in Paris between 1830 and 1848, because the unfortunate and unchivalrous acceptance by Louis-Philippe of the throne of which the elder branch of his house had been violently dispossessed, introduced a schism into the royalist and

[1] *Chapel of St. John.*

Catholic society in which the Digbys lived. Chateaubriand, at the fatal moment in 1830, advised Louis-Philippe not to accept the throne, but to act as Regent for the child, Henry V., in whose favour Charles X. had now abdicated; but, he says, he saw "in the eyes of Louis-Philippe," as he spoke, "the desire to be king."

CHAPTER VI

"MORES CATHOLICI"

"They find themselves compelled to look around for some great bond of fellowship which may embrace all who love order and freedom, light and justice; all men of every climate, and language, and people."

Kenelm Digby, *Broadstone of Honour*, "*Godefridus*."

I

In 1829, or 1830, while Kenelm Digby was living partly at Cambridge and partly at St. Germain on the Seine, he began to compose the longest and greatest work of his life, the *Mores Catholici*, or "Ages of Faith," and was engaged upon it for the next ten years.[1] He wrote it between his thirtieth and fortieth year, in the age when men best combine vigour with experience. From the age of little over twenty to the age of nearly eighty Digby wrote very continuously, besides painting or copying in an amateur way a multitude of pictures, to give to churches, so that he cannot be accused of the mortal sin of sloth. It will be convenient here to give a chronological list of his published works:

I. PROSE PERIOD

	Published
Evidences of the Christian Religion, Norrisian Prize Essay -	1820
Broadstone of Honour—1st edition - - - - -	1822
2nd edition, much revised and enlarged - - -	1826
3rd „ - - - - - - - - - - -	1828

[1] The title was probably suggested by St. Augustine's treatise called *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*.

Mores Catholici—

		Published			Published
1st volume	- -	1831	7th volume	- -	1836
2nd ,,	- -	1832	8th ,,	- -	1837
3rd ,,	- -	1833	9th ,,	- -	1839
4th ,,	- -	1833	10th ,,	- -	1840
5th ,,	- -	1834	11th ,,	- -	1842
6th ,,	- -	1835			

Between 1844 and 1848 came out a new edition of fifty-five copies of *Mores Catholici*, and also the revised edition of the *Broadstone of Honour* in four volumes.[1] He then began

Compitum—

1st volume	- -	1849	5th volume	- -	1851
2nd ,,	- -	1849	6th ,,	- -	1852
3rd ,,	- -	1850	7th ,,	- -	1854
4th ,,	- -	1850			

Lovers' Seat, 2 vols. - - - - - - - - 1856
Children's Bower, 2 vols. - - - - - - - - 1858
Chapel of St. John, 1 vol. - - - - - - - - 1861
Evenings on the Thames, 2 vols. - - - - - - - 1864

II. VERSE PERIOD

Short Poems - - - - - - - - - - 1865
A Day on the Muses' Hill - - - - - - - - 1867
Little Low Bushes - - - - - - - - - 1869
Halcyon Hours - - - - - - - - - - 1870
Ouranogaia, 2 vols. - - - - - - - - - 1872
Last Year's Leaves, including poems published in 1872 under title *Hours with the Falling Leaves* - - - - 1873
Temple of Memory - - - - - - - - - 1875
Epilogue to Previous Works in Prose and Verse - - - 1876

[1] The *Mores Catholici* and *Compitum* were printed by Rivingtons and sold by Joseph Dolman of Bond Street, *The Chapel of St. John* by T. Richardson of Paternoster Row. Messrs. Longman & Green published the *Lovers' Seat*, *Children's Bower*, *Evenings on the Thames*, and *Temple of Memory*. Edward Lumley, of Chancery Lane, published the 1844-48 edition of *Broadstone of Honour*, and Mr. Quaritch the edition of 1877.

Quaritch's edition in five volumes of the *Broadstone of Honour* was published in 1877, and Kenelm Digby died in 1880.

Digby published all his works at his own risk and cost. It is a melancholy reflection that while a smart novel brings in large profits to authors and publishers, and dull biographies of uninteresting political or ecclesiastical persons pay their way, a book like *Mores Catholici* can only get published if the author is rich enough to meet most of the cost. Digby has had more honour in the United States than in his own country, for an edition of *Mores Catholici* was produced at Cincinnati in the year 1905.

He frequently indicated at the beginning of a volume some Catholic charity or purpose, to which all the money produced by the sale, not only any profits, but the total receipts, would be applied. The receipts would probably in every case have failed to meet the cost of publication, had he chosen to use them for that purpose. The buying public was not large. Digby's books were opposed to all the ideas and tastes of the rationalist and utilitarian Liberals, so much in the ascendant during the nineteenth century: they were entirely objectionable to thorough-going Protestants, and were not in one main respect acceptable to the Oxford School, since Digby denied their special theory, and book-buying Catholics were neither numerous nor wealthy. Most reviewing journals were silent as to his works. Many less learned readers must have been deterred by the numerous quotations in Latin and Greek, of which Digby does not usually supply translations. His method of bringing out *Mores Catholici* and *Compitum* by a volume or two at a time was most unfavourable to

sales, and also has had the result of making it difficult to procure complete copies of either work. This method is also the best way in which to escape notice, for, after the first volume or two, reviewers are naturally disinclined to take up the topic afresh.

It would be excellent, if the eleven long volumes of the *Mores Catholici*, at least, could now be republished in England, but no publisher would undertake this at his own risk, as a commercial venture, and so, unless a patron intervenes, this immense storehouse of wisdom and beauty and knowledge must remain in the possession of the few who are lucky enough to possess complete copies. The same may be said of *Compitum*, which is really a continuation of the *Mores*. Republication is the more needed, since neither of these works (except in the scarce edition de luxe of 55 copies of the *Mores Catholici* printed 1845-48) was printed in type large or well-spaced enough to be agreeable to the eyes of men and women in mature life or old age, the readers, perhaps, who would most appreciate them. A well-printed edition would be almost sufficient literature for advanced old age, so much do these works contain suitable to that autumnal and meditative season. It is tantalising to think how easily a wealthy man could republish the *Mores Catholici* with money often applied to less useful benevolent objects. Would that these words could inspire some such benefactor with the idea! It would be a gift to the Catholic Church and to all those who love noble literature.

Digby's books are not in the form of continuous history or reasoning, and may fairly be accused of being too discursive, but one advantage of this is that one can take them up at any time, and open them on any page,

and read in them for a short time or a long equally. In this way I have read them for twenty years or more, with refreshment and consolation, and never have found them stale or wearisome. I know, however, how much tastes differ, and I can quite well imagine people of a different type of mind, even those in sympathy, who might be almost unable to read writing of this kind. The books, even more in style than in substance, were out of harmony with the spirit of the age in which they appeared. Never was there a writer more independent of public opinion, or less obsequious to its fashion, than Kenelm Digby.

Catholics, notwithstanding any difficulty of this kind, should read the works of Kenelm Digby, because by them they will learn to take a wide and noble view of their own religion and be greatly confirmed in their allegiance. They will learn, while holding to it with the utmost strength, and without concessions on essential matters, to look generously and charitably on those outside the central Church. It is possible to be a strong, unyielding, and yet quite friendly opponent, and those who possess the most definite and lucid conception of their own cause will feel and give rise to less exasperation than those whose minds are not clear and firm.

II

Digby says that the idea of the book *Mores Catholici* first entered his mind at Vespers in a monastic church, and at the close of the work he recalls this in a passage of fine unmetred poetry, for life to him was a poem.

"Reader, you may remember that it was on the day when souls are kindled, as the flame of embers is enlivened at the breathing of the wind, on the day of All

Saints, and as the sun, then entering the eighth degree of Scorpio, was sinking to its bed, that we began this journey back in contemplation through past ages. After leaving the church, my insatiate eyes had travelled to the spangled firmament, where the stars, in magnitude and lustre, shining forth with more than wonted glory, seemed to declare the beatitude of those whose justice was an effluence of Him whose seat is thus inlaid with thick-studded gems. These planets, to which the sun appears so much more glorious than he does from our own earth, globes in which his heat is so intense, which move with such amazing velocity that the Greeks even gave them the name of divine messengers; some so near the sun as to be seldom visible, being lost in the effulgence of its rays; others more remote, alternately rising in the morning and in the evening; but, whether bringing light or love, constantly turned towards the source of their illumination—these stupendous bodies, moving thus in such obedience, and contributing to the happiness of beings so remote as men, seemed to invite the mind to continue meditating on those living splendours, that see face to face Him who is the light of all intelligence, that glow with flames of love proportionate to their distance from its everlasting fountain, and that, by its sweet influence, are to their ever constant swiftness winged, impelled by Him that moves the sun in heaven and all the stars. In Ages of Faith men witnessed order in the Church resembling such as in these stars is seen. That evening, that I first conceived this work, the moon, then in the twenty-sixth degree of Taurus, was nearly half-illumined, as her sixteenth day would indicate, and in the sky all night. I remember it well, for she did me good service in the gloom of the deep wood through which I had to journey. When the monks left the choir, the sun had already touched the forest on the plain beneath, and ere I left the cloister, through its broad arches could be traced some pale splendours. Capella and Cassiopeia lay over the north-

east; the Pleiads nearer to the Orient, Aquila towards the south by west, and Cygnus nearly over-head. Lyra was fainter in the west; while the Great Bear paced his circle in the north-west. When I rode forth, some I had watched were sunk, and others risen in their stead. The Twins and Orion towards the north-west with undulating glance played along the horizon, the Belt just rising below Aldebaran; the Bear was mounting to the Pole. Before I pulled the rein it was midnight, and still increase of beauty. Orion fired the south-east nearly half-way from the earth to the summit of heaven's concave; the Pleiads moved aloft verging to the south. Sirius and Pegasus had caught my gaze. Associated in my memory with that eve of All Saints and vigil of the dead, when the first thought of this long history darted across my mind, I can thus easily recall their places as they wheeled through the serene air from fall of night till the twelfth hour, star by side of star, and now, after ten solar circles, the inclination of the axle on which our world spins ever night and day recalls the same great solemnities of the Church, and again she chants her own beatitude, as truly blessed mother. But while our earth has been performing these revolutions through the unimaginable space, while spirits beyond number have been added to that crowd above, and we, still journeying through the obscure atmosphere of mortal creatures, have been enjoying deeper and deeper insight into the manners and events of past ages, accumulating proofs with every change of position produced by the silent flight of time, the circuit of our vision widening from day to day, causing increase of beauty and of wonder since those first vespers, when we heard sung, 'O quam gloriosum est regnum in quo cum Christo gaudent omnes sancti'; while heaven as well as earth has thus participated in the advance of years, it seems as if for us time had been stationary, the one All Hallows lasting without interruption while we were composing the works which were to illustrate it, as when

the brief space of another holy season sufficed for that mysterious voyage to the three worlds which the monarch of celestial poesy describes. . . . It is that, when high and glorious themes have seized the faculties with sensations of delight, time passes, and a man perceives it not."

And on the last page of the *Mores* Digby says :

"The anthems for the festival of All Saints which first suggested this course of historical inquiry, may be repeated as the best conclusion, and with the voice of holy choirs let us end. 'Admirabile est nomen tuum, Domine, quia gloriâ et honore coronasti sanctos tuos. Domine, spes sanctorum, et turris fortitudinis eorum, dedisti hereditatem timentibus nomen tuum, et habitabunt in tabernaculo tuo in saecula.'"[1]

Mores Catholici is a book of great dimensions based upon a very simple ground-scheme. Digby takes the eight beatitudes named in the Sermon on the Mount, and shows by a multitude of citations in what ways each of them was realized in practice, at least in some degree, in the Ages of Faith, the Faith which though still continuing, was, he thinks, broken and diminished by, and since, the religious revolution of the sixteenth century. The eight Beatitudes are these :

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are the meek ; for they shall possess the land.
3. Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted.
4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice ; for they shall be filled.
5. Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy.
6. Blessed are the clean in heart ; for they shall see God.

[1] "Admirable is thy name, Lord, because thou hast crowned thy saints with glory and honour. Lord ! hope of the saints, and tower of their strength, thou hast given the inheritance to those who revere thy name, and they shall dwell in thy tent for ever."

7. Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.

8. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

These were ideals laid down by an Authority as to whose divine nature there was then, among professed Christians, no doubt or question raised, at any rate, in a public way. They were the ideals of humility, mildness, penitence, justice, mercy, purity, peacefulness, endurance of wrong. Digby shows how in rude ages of nations slowly issuing from the pride, savagery, coarseness, lust, intemperance, cruelty and love of fighting characteristic of barbarians, these ideals were powerfully and steadily upheld by the Catholic Church, and did really largely prevail and leaven every part of life, industry, government, the family, the schools, the fine arts, literature, the professions, and even war. The success was within limits, and the Protestant Reformation was, in a sense, a revolt of the still only partially tamed Teutonic tribes, in these islands and in all northern Europe, against the spiritual Roman Empire, which had for a while suffered from its own success and prosperity. But the true principles of the Sermon on the Mount remained in the Catholic Church, whatever may have been the faults or lapses of many of its children, and they were revived by the northern storm, while the Reformation movement swept onwards towards regions still further remote from the central principles and the realm of peace.

At the beginning of *Mores Catholici* Digby says of the view which he recommends to his readers:

"Such a view would present a varied and immense horizon, comprising the manners, institutions, and spirit

of many generations of men long gone by; we should see in what manner the whole type and form of life were Christian, although its detail may often have been broken and disordered; for instance, how the pursuits of the learned, the consolations of the poor, the riches of the Church, the exercises and dispositions of the young, and the common hope and consolation of all men, harmonized with the character of those who sought to be poor in spirit; how again, the principle of obedience, the constitution of the Church, the division of ministration, and the rule of government, the manners and institutions of society, agreed with meekness and inherited its recompense; further, how the sufferings of just men, and the provisions for a penitential spirit were in accordance with the state of those that were to mourn and weep; then, how the character of men in sacred order, the zeal of the laity, and the lives of all ranks, denoted the hunger and thirst after justice; again, how the institutions, the foundations, and the recognized principle of perfection proclaimed men merciful; moreover how the philosophy which prevailed, and the spiritual monuments which were raised by piety and genius, evinced the clean of heart; still further how the union of nations and the bond of peace which existed even amidst savage discord, wars and confusion, as also how the holy retreats for innocence which then everywhere abounded, marked the multitude of pacific men; and finally, how the advantage taken of dire events and the acts of saintly and heroic fame revealed spirit which shunned not suffering for the sake of justice."

This sentence summarises the scope of the eleven crowded volumes of *Mores Catholici*. Written upon these lines the book is a wonderful collection of sayings and happenings illustrating every side of life during the ages of unbroken ecclesiastical unity in Europe, that is, in all the Christian world save those parts which

were decaying under the Greek Emperors, or were submerged beneath the flood of Islam.

Digby, in the *Mores Catholici*, was in advance of his time in reinstating the intellectual position of the Middle Ages. Fewer people would now speak, like Ernest Renan, so late as 1883, of " l'effroyable aventure du moyen âge, cette interruption de mille ans dans l'histoire de civilisation." [1] Digby, on the contrary, says, and it is surely the more reasonable and true view that there was no such terrific chasm in intellectual continuity:

" To a Catholic, not only the philosophical but also the literary history of the world, is prodigiously enlarged; objects change their relative position, and many are brought into resplendent light, which before were consigned to obscurity. While the moderns continue, age after age, to hear only of the Caesars and the philosophers, the Catholic discovers that there lies between the heathen civilization and the present, an entire world, illustrious with every kind of intellectual and moral greatness; the names which are first upon his tongue are no longer Cicero and Horace, but St. Augustin, St. Bernard, Alcuin, St. Thomas, St. Anselm; the places associated in his mind with the peace and dignity of learning, are no longer the Lyceum and the Academy, but Cîteaux, Cluny, Crowland, or the Oxford of the Middle Ages." [2]

All this world used to be carefully hidden from the view of Englishmen, and, though it is probably rather better now, certainly so late as the time that I was myself at Eton, there was nothing in the school course to inform a boy that there was any literature or philosophy worth notice between Tacitus and Shakespeare. A deep-thinking American writer has said that the

[1] *Souvenirs de Jeunesse.* [2] *Mores Catholici*, vol. iii.

thirteenth century was the European "Age of Pericles." [1] One may certainly ask whether in solidity of learning, and laborious and patient thought, there has not been a gradual decline from that period to this present age of brilliant disintegration, and the same question arises with regard to Art in architecture, painting and sculpture. Are we not arriving, that author suggests, at a second edition of the Lower Empire?

There was a true appreciation of *Mores Catholici* in a book, published in 1838, called *Reminiscences of Rome*, by an anonymous author who styles himself "A member of the Arcadian Academy," an institution of that city. He says:

"And here let me pay a passing tribute of grateful homage to a philosopher, though to me personally unknown, whose works, redolent with the choicest flowers of religious poesy, have contributed not a little to banish the *ennui* of many a cheerless hour of my existence. In the sublimity of his views the author of *Mores Catholici*, not unlike his favourite device, the Cross of Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, appears to stand isolated and alone in the Republic of Letters. His graphic pen describes scenes so refined, so philosophic, and, withal, so devout, as to make the fictitious and guilty episodes of novelists and romance-writers paltry and vulgar in comparison. The holiest imaginings, the purest tendencies, and the noblest aspirings after all that is chaste, love-worthy and true characterize the pages especially of his later productions. The exalted tone of his religious and moral feelings, and the mystic images wherewith he clothes them, added to the not unfrequently eloquent and melodious style of his diction, seize upon the fancy of his reader, and raising it, as it were, upon angelic wings to a sphere

[1] Brookes Adams, *Law of Civilization and Decay.*

above this earth, introduces the soul to communion with those purified intelligences that once adorned his now, alas! I fear for ever by-gone 'Ages of Faith.'"

This writer found that Digby's works had power to "banish the *ennui* of many a cheerless hour." This is most true. From time to time, especially in more advanced years, almost every one must feel a certain *taedium vitae*. One is, perhaps, unoccupied for the time being, and feels solitary; yet, as one looks round the books on one's shelves there is none that seems to suit the mood. Then take out a volume of *Mores Catholici*, or *Evenings on the Thames*, and the weariness will depart. To read most authors is like hearing one person talk, and as Keats says, "Where's the voice however soft one would hear so very oft?" But Digby is like a friend who introduces one into a wide circle of charming persons, and these are not one's own co-temporaries, of whose conversation and ideas one may have had enough, but men and women, the *élite* of all times down to the middle of the nineteenth century, and of many countries. One meets them too in a setting of pleasant places in this country and on the Continent. All these persons belong in some sense or another to the Catholic Church, because if they are pre-Christians or non-Catholics, they are only quoted when they express Catholic wisdom or feeling. Adversaries are, indeed, quoted, but only as shades against which the Catholic beauty stands out in relief. Read for an hour, and your weariness will have passed away, and you can face the world again.

A writer in the *Dublin Review* in 1840, commenting on the first nine volumes of *Mores Catholici*, says:

"It was impossible that, through vague assertions, generalities, and fine writing, we could entertain a fit conception of the all-pervading spirit of those Catholic ages, and accordingly the author has sought to prove his theories in the only way in which the subject admitted a proof,—by such immense research, such stores of illustration as we confidently assert to be unparalleled in modern literature. We are quite astonished at the quantity of learning which is dispersed through this work; but so completely is it rendered subservient to the author's main object, that we lose sight of it in the train of new and interesting ideas the book excites in us. The author is not only familiar with the whole range of the classics, and perfect master of the Greek and Latin, but in Italian, Spanish, French and German, in these languages and in his own, he has read probably every work that is worth notice, and that not of one period only, but including the whole range of their literature, not upon one class of subjects only—he has left none of them untouched. Divinity, History, Poetry, and Memoirs have been his favourite studies, his mind is imbued with them, he appears to have delighted in the old romances. . . ."

Here also (it is sixty-five years later) may be quoted a notice of the American edition of *Mores Catholici* which was published in 1905. It was given in the *Ecclesiastical Review* of Philadelphia. The writer says:

"Catholic communities, especially librarians who have not a copy of Digby's *Ages of Faith*, will be glad of the publication of a work which, like the *Monks of the West* by Montalembert, or *Christian Schools and Scholars*, possesses the permanent value of both a Classic and a History. It is true that *Mores Catholici* cannot be styled a history in the critical sense in which the term is now commonly understood, as designating exhaustive and accurate collections of statistical documents and

elaborately certified annals. Probably we should not consider its actual worth as great as it is, if it were a work of such a character, for then it could never have exercised the intellectual and religious influence arising out of its exposition and valuation of the ethical elements that furnished the sub-soil wherein the seed of all that is noble in European civilization was planted. Digby's power lay in his ability to create an atmosphere at once healthy and agreeable, He had an instinct for whatever was beautiful, and his aim was to communicate it and realize it for the adornment of religion and the uplifting of man to the level of religious perfection. His extraordinary capacity for storing varied information was something like that of Cornelius or Lapidi. He seems in the intellectual order to be what the gardener was, who designed the terraced paradise of Isola Bella, one of the Borromean islands in the beautiful Lago Maggiore, a lover of flowers and trees, collecting the beautiful and useful growth from every part of the globe to illustrate the culture of the human soul under the unchanging spring-like influence of the Catholic Faith. In *Mores Catholici* the author has collected 'the fragrance of past Ages,'—that is a true appreciation. He was a young man when, still outside the pale of the Church, he published that masterpiece of Christian ethics, the *Broadstone of Honour*, in which he identified himself with the good and great, the heroic and holy, in former times. Sterling, no mean judge of Christian chivalry, tells us, after reading one of Digby's books, that he never pored over a volume 'more full of gentleness and earnest admiration for all things beautiful and excellent.' These judgments are not exaggerated when applied to the author's present work in particular. Aside from the didactic instruction in the Ecclesiastical History and moral philosophy it gives our youth, such a work might well be employed as a sort of accompanying torch to illuminate the way to a practical appreciation of all serious study in the field of religion and ethics.

There is danger that the new methods of criticism in history cause the average reader to over-estimate the necessity of dwelling upon the darker side of historical facts, and of lapsing from the extreme of optimistic fanaticism to that of immoderate objectivity, which, under the plea of investigating truth, loses sight of the primary object aimed at in all teaching of history. That object is to make the experience of the past the caution of the future, rather than to lay bare the evil for the multitude to gloat over. Digby's *Mores Catholici* is an excellent antidote against this tendency. From it we learn what is profitable for society or the individual. It gives us a right estimate of the value of religion, without subjecting the mind to either the strain of hard theories, or the delusive sense of unreality in matters of faith. The author tells the story of those great and good teachers of the past whom Grotius, though by no means an enthusiastic admirer of the Scholastics, admits to have been safe guides in all human conduct, irrespective of times and places. 'Ubi in re morum consentiunt, vix est ut errent' (*Proleg. De Jure Belli ac Pacis*).[1]

"For the priest in particular there are few works that offer more refreshing and instructive matter of thought and fact told with a certain amount of fervour and beauty of diction, the frequent reading of which can hardly fail to impart the habit of good style and fluency of language, together with an atmosphere or temper most valuable for understanding rightly the methods and manners of the ages of faith."

It might be added that a priest who possessed the *Broadstone of Honour*, *Mores Catholici* and *Compitum* would have an inexhaustible store of ammunition from which to feed his sermons. On every page he will find quotations from the best ancient and modern thinkers and poets suggesting trains of thought to himself, and

[1] "Where these agree in the matter of morals, they can hardly err."

many a tale of heroic and saintly deeds to illustrate his themes. Those works would be invaluable to those, the great majority, who cannot have a large library of their own. They are a library in little.

The *Mores Catholici* pleased that noble son of France, the Count de Montalembert, and assisted him in writing his great work, *The Monks of the West*. In the Introduction to that book he says: "I know no writer who has better comprehended and shown the happiness of monastic life, such as it is described and authenticated by ancient authors, than Mr. Kenelm Digby, in the tenth volume of the curious and interesting collection entitled *Mores Catholici*. It has served to guide me in this attractive study, and has afforded me a pleasure which I would wish to share with all my readers by referring them to this valuable work." And, again, Montalembert says, "The best book to make the Middle Ages known and loved is the work of a layman, and of a layman gone over from Anglicanism to the Church. . . . It is right to acknowledge that the defective aspect of the Middle Ages (what the Germans so justly call the *Schattenzeite*) has not been sufficiently brought to light by Mr. Digby." Montalembert's own study is, perhaps, the fairest of all books in this respect so far as regards monastic institutions.

III

The charge is often made against English Catholics, and some of them perhaps give occasion for it, that they do not sufficiently appreciate the piety and moral virtues of their non-Catholic fellow-countrymen. This charge could not rightly be brought against Kenelm Digby,

all of whose books furnish evidence to the contrary. His feeling is well shown by the following passage, written in 1842, near the end of *Mores Catholici*. Why, he asks, should we despair of England ?

"Have we not reason to hope that she will not for ever scorn the sacred mysteries of faith and Rome that watches over them ; that she will not continue to ridicule the name of priests, as though they were next inheritors to fools ; that she will not continue to jest at their reverend and holy ceremonies ; but that she will be brought to believe, with the Apostles and holy fathers, that these things are full of divine truths ; to believe with all learned historians that these priests having from Rome their mission, were the first bringers in of all civility ; to believe with philosophers, so well represented by Picus of Mirandula, that without them morality is an empty sound ; to believe with political economists that their institutions can alone preserve society from the horrors of pauperism and servile wars ; to believe with those who have found pleasure in the preceding books that the manners which they taught were truly those inculcated from the mountain ; lastly, to believe the one voice of these past ages themselves, when they tell her they will make her happy and glorious by their faith. Yes, let us hope that England may be won ; that the words of Isaiah may be applicable to her. 'Quae arida erit in stagna et sitiens in fontes aquarum,'[1] for, once enlightened, her wishes rest here for ever—won by that which she of her own generous nature covets most—won, the country of Cowper by fervent, true, and undefiled devotion ; the country of Johnson, by the inestimable riches of good sense ; the country of Milton, by the love of heavenly musings, and of embodying the sacred lore in bright poetic forms ; the country of Bacon, by whatever tends to the augmen-

[1] "She who was dry shall be turned to lakes and the thirsting to fountains of waters."

tation of solid learning, and to the stability and decorum of the social state; the country of Addison, by the food prepared, as if expressly for its instinct of the correct and orderly, which quells every unruly passion; the country of Shakespeare, by that which makes every flower of genius to germin in eternal peace; the country of Sterne, by pity mild, deep and tender sentimentality; in fine, the country of so many saints, poets, moralists and philosophers, by the tears and graces of that Holy Mother, of the everlasting counsel ordained to be to mortal men, of hope, of charity and love, the living spring, the sole ennobler of their nature. Then will she learn from her own experience that, in the holy Catholic and Roman faith, is all sustenance for the high intellectual and moral life of a people; that it alone possesses the great secret for inheriting both earth and heaven, all that can sweeten and compose to order the uncertain wanderings of the human existence, and all that can exalt with innocence as a preparation for everlasting beatitude, the dignity and happiness of man." [1]

This passage contains the key-note of all Digby's writings from first to last. He did not deny the existence outside the Catholic Church of all the virtues any more than he denied the outside existence of so many truly Catholic souls, but he held, without doubt or deviation, that in the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church all these scattered rays are focussed, and gathered up, and find their true and complete fulfilment and existence, and that outside the Church they are, so to speak, disembodied and acting in the void. This belief can be maintained without lack of charity. No one held more firmly than Digby the orthodox doctrine that many belong to the soul of the Catholic Church,

[1] *Mores Catholici*, xi. p. 467.

though not to its body, just as many belong to its body, but not to its soul.

Many, now, in England say: "We agree with all that you say about the Catholic Church; we agree in the main with all its doctrines, except that the Church is not, as you believe, that body which is in union with Rome, and has there its energizing centre, but is something "much wider"—all who profess and call themselves Christians, some of us think, or all those who recognize certain episcopal institutions, as others more restrictedly assert."

With these Digby could not agree, or even argue.

"You say," he replies, "for even to this outrage on historic truth our ears are destined, that the system which the law of England recognizes as the state religion is in reality Catholic as of yore; that it has been persecuted by kings and parliaments, and that it would not otherwise have departed, as in some points you admit it has, from the discipline and doctrine of antiquity; that it is your mother, to be excused and forgiven. To all this, one conversant with the dead will deem silence the best answer. Possunt haec credere, as St. Leo says, qui possunt talia patienter audire.[1] An historical study of the events which led to the catastrophe is a bad preparation for assent to the propositions which are generally advanced by those who do not view things from the centre of Catholic unity."

Digby, in his latest years, might have written this more softly, but certainly there is something rather irritating in those who, with their predecessors in title, have fully enjoyed the material benefits and supremacy of the State Church since the days of Elizabeth, and

[1] "Those can believe such things who are able to hear them with patience."

now picture it as a "branch" of the Catholic Church long-oppressed by heretical kings and parliaments. No doubt this much is true, and a reason for hope, that there has always been in the Church of England a section, sometimes very small, as in the eighteenth century, sometimes expanding, as in the seventeenth and nineteenth, who have regretted the separation from the Centre of Unity, and the breach with Catholic doctrine and consequent ritual.

Although Digby could not admit that separated communions in East or West are as much part of the Catholic Church after separation from the centre of unity as they were before, he held that these bodies are not untrue in belief or practice, but in various degrees incomplete. and all of them incomplete because divided from that centre. He illustrates this by a similitude in his book called *Evenings on the Thames*:

"If the whole truth were told by travellers I believe it would be found that what we English, on going abroad, like most in the scenery of foreign countries is something that, under a form which is new to us, puts us in mind nevertheless of what we loved at home in dear old England. That grey ruin, for example, on the hill, that path by the river, that stile on the road-side, leading into a wood; that shady lane at the entrance of the village; that solitary church; that blue horizon; that babbling stream with the plank across it; all of these objects are only a French, German, Italian or Swiss version, as it were, of what was familiar to us from our childhood; but then one must confess also that generally this version of an old favourite comes, for some reason or other, nearer to the ideal of what we loved than the original ever did. There is somehow more meaning in it; there is besides generally more

sun in the picture; a warmer tone of colouring; there is more history in it, more antiquity, more pleasing terror, more that we cannot fathom, more mystery, more romance, and, in some instances, more sublimity."

"Now," continues Digby, "all this holds in religion. The Catholic Church, for those whose youth was passed out of it, comes upon them like a familiar image transformed, like a remembrance of what was best loved in their earliest days; but it is a remembrance that is allied with an increase of attraction in the subject; as, in point of fact, it is the Catholic view which imparts reality, and meaning, and legitimate cause for wonder, to what they once loved and reverenced, without much exercise of logic, and merely as children, without fully possessing even the power of enjoying what they beheld, and heard, and wished to love and to admire, more than strict truth, at that time, would have given them grounds for."

This was always Kenelm Digby's thought. The Catholic religion, centred as to its visible organization in the Chair of St. Peter at Rome, is the completion, and sanctification, and elevation of all that is good in other religious bodies, and in social life, and in nature. It is the central sun, itself receiving light and fire from God through Christ, which warms and illumines all else, and gives colour to things, and so transfigures all that it touches.

St. Augustine's meaning was the same when he spoke of the African Donatists, the lineal succession of whose Bishops from the Apostles, and the validity of whose sacraments, he did not deny. He said to them, "What are you doing, my brother? We are brothers; we call upon the same God; we believe in the same Christ; we hear the same Gospel; we answer with the same

Amen; we celebrate the same Easter. Why are you without" (the Catholic Church) "while I am within?"[1]

According to some modern theories, St. Augustine was mistaken, which is of course possible, and the Donatists as well as himself and the Bishops with whom he was in communion in Africa, were, as they themselves held, within the Catholic Church. Again, he says in his letter to Theodorus:

"Who can say that he has the charity of Jesus Christ so long as he does not remain in his unity? When, then, they (the Donatists) re-enter the Catholic Church, *they do not receive there that which they already had; but that which they had not*, and that which makes useful to them that which they had, since they are now grafted upon the root of charity by the bond of peace and the unity of the Spirit, by which all the other sacraments of truth which they already had become useful to them for salvation."

The words italicized summarize the thought, which Digby was for ever expressing, and he extended their range to all people who have the natural good qualities of humanity, in which, perhaps Digby, living in a long christianized world, believed more strongly than did Augustine, living in a world decaying and still half pagan. Cardinal Newman has expressed the same thing with his usual lucidity when he says (*Essay on Development*, chap. i.) that a gradual conversion

"consists in addition and increase chiefly, not destruction." . . . "True religion is the summit and perfection of false" (*i.e.* incomplete) "religions; it combines in one whatever there is of good and true separately remaining in each. And, in like manner, the Catholic Creed is for the most part the combination of separate

[1] Enarr. in Psalmis, liv. 16.

truths, which heretics have divided among themselves, and err in dividing. So that, in matter of fact, if a religious mind were educated in, and sincerely attached to, some form of heathenism or heresy, and they were brought under the light of truth, it would be drawn off from error into the truth, not by losing what it had but by gaining what it had not, not by being unclothed, but by being clothed upon. That same principle of faith, which attaches it to its original wrong doctrine, would attach it to the truth; and that portion of its original doctrine which was to be cast off as absolutely false, would not be directly rejected, but indirectly, *in* the reception of the truth which is its opposite. True conversion is ever of a positive, not a negative character."

IV

All through these years Kenelm Digby maintained correspondence with his old Cambridge ally, Ambrose Phillips de Lisle, of Garendon and Grace Dieu in the county of Leicester. I may quote here two passages from de Lisle's letters relating to *Mores Catholici*. The first, dated at Garendon, 18th November, 1834, refers to the fifth volume published that year. It was addressed to Digby at 22 Rue de la Ville L'Evêque, Paris.

"My dear Digby.—I was thinking of you, and saying to myself how much I longed to hear from you again when I was greeted by the arrival of your delightful letter. I was also on the point of writing to you, and you have cause to think me ungrateful for not having sooner thanked you for your most welcome present of your Book, which arrived here quite safe. But first I must tell you how enchanted I am with your book. I like it the best of all your books. When I read the third volume of the *Mores Catholici* I thought you never could write anything again that could equal that in

sublimity of style or in the interesting views it gives of Christian history, but this seems to me to surpass all you have ever before written; it is indeed beyond all praise; in reading it I seem to be listening to one whose voice fills one with the most enchanting delight and calm contentment. How you discover to every one the sublime views of the Church! What a world of good must result from this, for how few Catholics in England enter into the spirit of the Church, but no one can read your book without catching the flame which burns throughout it. Mr. Kirk of Lichfield told me that he had begun to read it aloud to his people on the Sunday, after Vespers, in the beautiful new Gothic church which he has built at Lichfield, and that he intends to go completely through with it. I never beheld any picture more admirable or more lovely than that which you place before our eyes in the very commencement of the book. Your vision of the saintly crowd of all degrees whose pursuit is the thirst after justice is quite enrapturing, and one imagines such an harmonious shout of heavenly melody bursting from the venerable multitude as melts the very soul. But how sad it is to turn from such a scene to contemplate the melancholy change that has taken place all over Europe. . . ."

His second letter, dated 11th January, 1835, relates to the next volume of *Mores Catholici*.

"I have done nothing but read and meditate upon your Golden Book ever since I last wrote. I cannot describe the impressions it produced on me, and what I said in my last letter only makes me ashamed that I can express myself so poorly in praise of a book to study which would delight the Angels. You tell me sometimes that I look at the bright side of things; well now, you shall never tell me again that I am too hopeful, for your book of itself is enough to convince any rational being that the age that could produce such a work is

one pre-eminently calculated to inspire hope, and to justify the brightest anticipations. To praise your book, my dear Digby, would require an angel's tongue. I assure you it has many times overpowered me as with a torrent of celestial delight; the disquisition on the ecclesiastical Chant and Musick is sublime; I could fancy myself listening to the melodies of the Angels. The beautiful histories too with which you have illustrated the whole are most affecting. That story of the Friars of St. Francis reconciling the Bishop and Governor of Assisi is enough to melt into a flood the most frozen heart, and your admirable description makes one almost hear them singing that holy song which changed hatred into love. When I think of your book I am filled with amazement. You say in your letter, my dear Digby, that you look upon my friendship as one of the most happy events of your life. What then must I say of your friendship? No words of mine can express what I feel, what I owe to you. . . . I hope you will not forget what you tell me about returning to England in the spring, and then you know with what longing desire Laura and I will expect your arrival at the shady groves of Grace Dieu, and if your Lady is fond of musick, we can at least boast of our nightingales in the wood. We have got a most curious room at the very top of the house which has a very extensive view in two directions, one to the East and the other to the West, and it looks over leads and pointed roofs beyond which rises the cross on the end of the Chapel, at one side of which is the little Belfry with our Angelus Bell, at the sound of which all the neighbouring parsons are said to quake. . . ."

At the close of *Mores Catholici* Digby bids farewell to his book in touching words:

"The thought of having done, of having had life prolonged to finish any work by the permission and grace of Him in Whom all things live, is solemn. 'Tis like

the sound of the sea or the murmur of the grove, after the departure of a friend whose presence on the previous day had tuned it to unmixed gladness ; it is like the sorrow of one who casts a last lingering look on the beautiful cities of Italy, or at the snow-capped mountains of the bright warm South, which he is leaving never to see them more ; or like recalling to mind the journeys which were made along the beautiful shores of Alpine lakes, when one was a boy, the thousand innocent transports to which the heart yielded with such ardour, as one walked through vineyards, rode through valleys, clomb rocky mountains, and swam in the placid or rushing waters of those delicious climes."

It is true, perhaps, that no conversions are directly, or absolutely, due to books or conversation, but only to events in life and to the mysterious magnetic attraction which works through and from the central Catholic Church and draws into it those hearts which have the right steel in them. Yet it is within the province of Reason to judge whether this attraction is to the higher or lower parts of human nature, and to advise the deciding Will, or Self, whether to yield to, or resist, it. Books like those of Digby play an important part in enlightening the Reason, and, like a midwife or doctor, assist in the "accouchement" of the soul. In this sense Digby probably assisted many to make the great decision, when his books were more widely known than they are now. Mother Anne Pollen, of the Sacred Heart, in her excellent Memoir of Mother Mabel Digby, gives one such instance. Mabel Digby's father was Simon Digby, of Osbertstown, County Kildare, a near cousin of Kenelm and, though a strong Protestant of the Orange brand, always a good friend of his. His wife, much influenced, says Mother Pollen, by *Mores Catholici*,

was received into the Catholic Church in September 1852 at Montpellier, and was soon followed by her three daughters, Geraldine, Mabel, and Eva. Mabel was received in 1853, at the age of eighteen, and became a postulant of the Order of the Sacred Heart at Marmoutiers on 19th February, 1857. She made her novitiate at Conflans, took her first vows there in March, 1859, and, after years spent in convents in France, and then at Roehampton, was elected in 1895, in succession to a French Superior, to be Superior General of the whole of this great international Order, the first English woman to become this. Her noble life and character are beautifully described in Mother Pollen's Memoir. She died in the year 1911, and was buried at Roehampton. It was Mabel Digby who steered the Order through its great crisis of expulsion from France, and founded anew in other lands the forty houses lost in that country of its birth.

Mabel Digby's conversion was not in the least due to reading or study,—she was not a girl of that kind,—but to a sudden movement, under a radiation from the altar, in a church in France, which to her young friends at that time seemed miraculous. The conversion of her mother, however, was one of the long and slow kind, much assisted by Kenelm Digby's writings.

CHAPTER VII

"COMPITUM"

"Mille viae ducunt homines per saecula Romam
Qui Dominum toto quaerere corde volunt."

Alanus.

In the year 1849 Kenelm Digby published the first two volumes of the last of his three largest works, entitled *Compitum*. This is the Latin word for a point at which roads meet, or to which roads converge, like the straight drives one sees in such forests as Compiègne or Fontainebleau, meeting at a point from which they radiate like spokes in a wheel. The meeting point in the book is formed by the central principles of the Catholic Church, in which alone is found the happiness and peace of those who travel by the many roads. The roads are the various phases of human life, such as the road of children, the road of youth, the road of the family, that of old age, that of the schools, that of travellers, of joy, of sorrow, of death, of contemplation, of wisdom, of warriors, of priests, of kings, of active life, of the poor, of friendship, and many others, through seven long volumes, crowded with admirable quotations and reflections. In the first pages Digby thus describes the genesis of this idea. The scene is his favourite haunt, the forest of St. Germain.

"On the elevated range which prematurely hides the setting sun from a city of France, whose ancient

is better than its recent fame, and yet in which many of this age have followed gentle studies in their youth, there is a gloomy forest bearing the venerated name of the great saint whose huge abbey towers still form one of its chief ornaments. . . . During the summer months the stranger,[1] coming to reside at the very skirts of the wood, became familiar with many of its secrets. In the house where he was lodged, there was a small upper room, of which the window received the light of the setting sun, and displayed in full beauty the vast undulating tract of the forest, as far as eye could reach. An old map of all its alleys, suspended there time out of mind, was the only decoration of that delicious little chamber, and on that map he used often to trace his walks, unravelling the intricate mazes through which he had wandered during the day. A certain palmer-like guest one night, as he remained with him alone, observed that it would be well to draw out a map of the intellectual forest through which men travel from youth to age, noting each turn of the various tracks that predecessors, as if with human feet, have worn, and showing how wonderfully nature has provided avenues and attractive openings to guide all pilgrims safely to their end. There was, besides, here, a local peculiarity, which seemed to add force to the suggestion, for far in the level forest's central gloom was one bright spot where stood a convent, girt by a smooth, sunny lawn, towards which innumerable paths conducted from all sides the least practised wanderer. Once a monastery of Augustine Friars, a holy sisterhood now possessed it."

The road-pierced forest idea is carried out throughout *Compitum*. Kenelm Digby had studied deeply books of forestry, and he makes many observations, in themselves good reading, like Evelyn's *Silva*, on the

[1] Digby speaks of himself throughout the book as " the stranger."

nature of various trees, always symbolizing them with facts of the human-moral sphere, after the fashion of St. Francis of Sales, from whose writings quite a good book on natural history might be extracted.

St. Augustine compares the Catholic Church itself to one of the great imperial roads of Rome, well guarded, running straight to the celestial city. Digby says that if you know the line of the high road running straight to its goal through the forest, you are safe. You can deviate here and there into pleasant and curving by-paths, keeping always the same direction, and you are sure, when you are tired of them, to recover the high road, which will take you to your destination.

If there are parallel by-ways safe to follow, there are also others which are tempting but fatally misleading; and some of these Digby indicates, the road of evil, of sin, of pride, of the "dry tree," of the "four winds." It is by knowing to what quagmires or hopeless jungles they lead, that the true and saving character of the right road is also, negatively, proved. The road of the "four winds" is that of "false, cold and denying doctrines," by which men are blown about.

The great modern deviation into the road of the four winds was when the Protestant Reformers abandoned the principle of a living Authority and Interpreter. As Balmès said, "By the principle that the Bible is the religion of Protestants, and that each is to judge of it by his own understanding, Protestantism is self-condemned, for it lays down a principle by which it dissolves itself."[1] And Digby says, in this chapter, "the history of the march of these opinions is the record of a succession of prodigious mistakes which have been maintained by

[1] *Le Protestantisme comparé au Catholicisme*, ch. vi.

men appealing to their own personal conviction independent of all authority for their warrant. . . . Surely to give a plain unvarnished statement of Calvinism, or Anglicanism, is to refute it. Yet impassioned men will cling to this, or rather, like the charmed vest of Hercules, heresy will attach itself to the very flesh of the man who unconsciously clothes himself with it. Hence St. Augustine says, 'Nihil infelicius est homine cui sua figmenta dominantur' ('Nothing is more unfortunate than the man who is dominated by his own fictions'). But, if the Catholic should err, we find that his fictions sit lightly on him. At the first word of the Church he flings them from him to the winds." "Men," says Digby, referring to the conflicting Protestant theories of the Church, "men who contradict themselves cannot be expected to agree with one another. Accordingly the want of harmony and unity, even under their own banners, may be regarded as another signal directing all wanderers wearied with discord to the centre at the Catholic Church."

From the day when St. Peter confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Christian religion has had faith or trust for its foundation. It demands not individual reasonings primarily, but individual acts of faith, the choice of the individual either to accept the results of collective intuition, embodied in formulas, or to reject them. The Catholic believes and accepts not only the verity of the New Testament, books received on the authority of the Church, but the collective inspiration of the Church interpreting and developing the doctrine down to the present day. Private judgment applied to Scripture was, and is, the fundamental principle of every form of Protestantism. Living Autho-

rity is that of Catholicism, and the Catholic has a firm and definite idea of what that Living Authority has been, and is. That is the great issue between Catholics and Protestants, and it has been that from the first. St. Augustine says, in his *De utilitate credendi*, the work so much commended by the philosophic Leibnitz, that "heretics" (the dissentients on fundamentals) attack the "Catholic Church" because it *commands* those who come to it to believe, "Quod illis qui ad eam veniunt praecipitur credere"; while those dissentients themselves boast that they "do not impose the yoke of believing, but open the fountain of teaching," in the name of Reason, "in nomine rationis," thereby flattering human vanity. He adds that religion must first be believed (*i.e.* accepted *de fide*), and afterwards understood, and can in no way be rightly entered upon without a grave command of Authority, "sine quodam gravi auctoritatis imperio iniri recte nullo modo potest"; and that nothing in the Catholic Church is so salutary as that authority precedes reasoning, "quam ut rationem praecedat auctoritas." Again, he says in argument against the Manichaeans that "if they deny that there should be belief in Christ unless undoubted reason can be given, they are not Christians"; "The Pagans say the same thing against us," he adds, "foolishly indeed, but not inconsistently," because they did not even pretend to accept any Authority. Augustine gave full value to the intellect ("intellectum valde ama"), but in its right place, and for its right purpose. He thought that reasoning should be founded on faith, not faith on reasoning. He said, "I believe in order that I may understand: I do not understand in order that I may believe."

" Dogma *datur* Christianis," said St. Thomas Aquinas, is given to them from outside, to be recognized and intellectually apprehended by them individually. The mediaeval Richard of St. Victor says that we ought to try to comprehend by reason what we hold from faith.

Kenelm Digby's works never had a popular circulation, but they were read by those interested in these subjects, who themselves write and influence others. His continuous output of volumes all bearing on the same central point, from 1822 to 1854, had a real and considerable, though little recognized, effect upon the rise and development of the Catholic movement, whether it took the form of change inside the Church of England and other bodies more remote from the Centre, or whether that of conversions to the Catholic Church, and the moral and intellectual stimulation of that society in England.

When Digby began to write he was almost alone in this country in his view of the Middle Ages, and was deemed a Don Quixote; but he had the singular aid of a very different writer, the Radical William Cobbett, whose popular history of the " Protestant Reformation," published in 1827, written not from a religious but a social and economic point of view, ran fiercely and absolutely counter to all the accepted and orthodox ideas of English history so forcibly voiced by Macaulay, the great writer whose time at Cambridge nearly coincided with Digby's. By the time that Digby had published the last of the seven volumes of *Compitum*, the Catholic hierarchy had been restored in England, and a number of clergy and laity in the national Church now virtually accepted all Catholic doctrine, except that of divinely ordained unity under the rule and

guidance of the successors of St. Peter at Rome. Some accepted even this, as more do at the present day. Of these some passed over; others were detained, partly, perhaps, by the idea of "corporate re-union." Is it possible—yet so it seems to be—that any one who *really believes* in the visible organic and Catholic Church centred in the Apostolic See, should wait to re-unite himself with that Church until every one else is ready to do so? He is like the rustic of Horace who waits to cross until the river has flowed away and left the channel dry.

> "Rusticus expectat dum defluit amnis, at ille
> Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis aevum."

The man who really accepts the idea will not wait until the rolling eternal river has flowed away; and, if he waits, this shows that he has not really accepted the idea, although he may think that he has accepted it. Action is the test of belief.

"Men" (says Digby) "take leave of error with too much ceremony; they speak too much about their nation, about the world, seeming to forget that each one of us here, let the nation and the world believe, or not believe, has, as Carlyle says, 'a life of his own to lead, one life; a little gleam of time between two eternities; no second chance to us for evermore.' You should, therefore, look to yourselves, and, having once caught sight of truth, hoist all your sails to follow her, heedless of the nation, or of the world's remonstrance. If you must wait for all to follow, I fear, as Dante says,

> 'Your choice may haply meet too long delay.'
>
> 'Eia age, rumpe moras; quo te sperabimus usque?
> Dum, quid sis, dubita,s jam potes esse nihil."[1]

Ulysses again, through desire to save them, makes

[1] Martial, "Up! act! no more delay! Till when shall we hope for you? While you doubt what to be you may already be Nothing."

his companions weep. After they had tasted the lotus none of them wished to return. Thus should men act towards brethren, when they find them so infatuated, as to think no more of escaping to their true country."

So that it is legitimate, he thinks, to give some pain to others to prevent them from passing the rest of their lives in the island of the lotus. Elsewhere Digby says:

" Some of those whom we have now, perhaps, with weak words grieved, are gentle and humane writers, whose instinctive reverence, and I know not what kind of poetic affection for all that pertains to the holy Catholic Church, which they view from a distance only, should render them, even without reference to diviner motives, the objects of our tenderest sympathy and sincerest love; but, if honour be due to their genius, and affection to their noble capacities, truth and sincerity are no less a sacred debt, which we should render to them, heedless of the loss and injury and multiplied sorrow, which may result too surely to ourselves." [1]

To such sincere and seeking people as these might be applied the beautiful passage in a Latin poem of St. Hildebert, applied by him to the invisible City of Heaven, which may thus be rendered:

" Founded on the rock securely,
Holy city, beauteous city!
Tossed on seas of dubitation,
From a distance I salute thee,
Call to thee, and seek for thee,
In thy haven is salvation;
In thy haven ships may anchor,
By thy circling hills defended
From the storms of desolation
Which destroy the hearts of mortals.
Heavenly city, peaceful city!
From a distance I salute thee,
Sigh for thee, and long for thee."

[1] *Mores Catholici*, vol. iii.

De longinquo te saluto. "Almost you persuade me to be a Christian," said the Roman Proconsul to St. Paul. How many, in these days, are almost persuaded to enter the Catholic Church! They stand by the river "tendentesque manus ripae ulterioris amore." But there is a Charon, who, "into his boat now receives these, now those, but keeps others far away from the shore."

"nunc hos, nunc accipit illos,
Ast alios longe submotos arcet arenâ."

In one way the *Compitum* is more important than the *Mores Catholici*. In it Digby develops, from many points of view, his idea of the Centre of Unity, the guardian of what he so often calls "central principles" of life in all its provinces. Like St. Augustine he regards the visible Church, with its visible centre, as the sacrament of unity and charity. It is easy enough to show that during the very earliest centuries the See of Rome was not the visible centre in the full sense of later times; but if evolution in history is accepted, and if evolution is to be deemed, as Christians must hold, the operation of the divine will, this is not, as the old Protestant controversialists supposed, a conclusive argument against the central living Authority. We need not deny that the acorn was not the oak in outward appearance. Those who have, since the schism of the sixteenth century, adhered to the Church of Rome, notwithstanding specious reasonings, and notwithstanding internal faults or scandals, have maintained unity against anarchy, life against dissolution, centripetal forces against centrifugal. We may hold in principle, and with all our heart and mind, that the Church centred in the Chair of St. Peter is the one Catholic Church, outside which is no safety; but in practical discussion

with non-Catholics, it is, perhaps, wiser to maintain it as the Central Church without which there never has been, and never will be, any possibility of real unity. And without the visible and ruling centre at Rome there never has been, and never could be, unity within the Central Church which comprises, as it must comprise, people of all nations, races, languages, and degrees of civilization and education. According to Our Lord, and according to his great follower St. Paul, the unity of the Christian Society is to be the unity of a living body. This is something quite different from a political confederation, or league, of nations or churches. The Catholic Church, centred at Rome, and diffused throughout the world, is, to say the least, the realized part of the Catholic Church as it should be. Other Christians, organized in national, or racial, or sectarian, bodies, are, in this sense, the unrealized part of the Catholic Church. Beyond this outer circle, or, as diplomats say, " sphere of influence," extend the vast spiritual regions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Mahommedanism, which still have to be brought within the central Christian civilization, and would be brought in the sooner if the realization of the whole of the Catholic Church within the limits of that civilization were completed, and if altar were no longer raised against altar throughout the world.

The *Compitum*, like the *Mores*, shows the extraordinary range of Digby's knowledge of theology, history and literature of all ages. His favourite authors at this period were Homer, the Greek tragedians, Plato, Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, Livy, St. Augustine chiefly among the Fathers, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard, Victor and Richard de St. Hugo,

Shakespeare, Walter Scott. But these were only great stars in his firmament amid a myriad authors, ancient, mediaeval and modern, and of all the nations. He had very perfect knowledge of the offices and hymns of the Catholic Church, and they sound through all his writings, as they do, like an undertone, through Dante's *Commedia*. "En clara vox redarguit, obscura quaeque personans." He had read all the old chronicles and the older French Memoirs, and was well versed in much of the literature of his own day. He is an excellent guide in reading to those who prefer literature somewhat mellowed by time to the last books from Smith's or Mudie's, and the solid wisdom of ages to the latest theory in circulation.

Kenelm Digby was accused by some of his critics of want of "original thought." If this were true, which I should not admit, yet is it not an even better service to have collected the wisdom of the wise and the beauty of poets, and tales of noble deeds, and to have arranged them in good order to support and elucidate a central theme of the highest interest? I, for one, would certainly rather have books of this kind on my shelves than the volumes of a good many "original thinkers" whose thoughts usually prove to be not so very original, after all.

CHAPTER VIII

FAMILY LIFE

"Oh! say what is thy children's bower
But Heaven here in a finite hour."

KENELM DIGBY, *Ouranogaia.*

I

KENELM DIGBY married, in the year 1833, a young Irish lady, Jane Mary Dillon, who was then only sixteen, about half his own age. She was the youngest daughter of Thomas Dillon, of Mount Dillon, and of Eadestown, in the County of Kildare. Her father was descended from Edmund Dillon of Ardenegarth, in County Westmeath, who died in 1629, a brother of Theobald, who was created first Viscount Dillon on 16th March, 1621. Their early ancestor, Sir Henry de Leon, went to Ireland with John, Earl of Moreton, afterwards King John, in 1185. Jane Mary's father, Thomas Dillon, married a lady of the family of Plunkett, and had three daughters, but no sons, except one who died young. The eldest daughter, Helena Maria, married Sir Michael Dillon Bellew, Bt., of Mount Bellew in Co. Galway. The second daughter, Mary Anne, married in 1834 the Hon. Arthur Southwell, and her son Thomas became the fourth Viscount Southwell, succeeding his uncle, and one of her daughters married Lord Fitzgerald, P.C., and another Evelyn Wood, the future Field-Marshal. Jane

Mary, the youngest daughter of Thomas Dillon, married Kenelm Digby, and brought to him £10,000, her share in her father's personal property, the family silver, and the Eadestown estate in County Kildare. She was her father's favourite child.

Jane Mary used to say that one ought to be proud of being a Catholic in a country not Catholic. She came of a purely Catholic and Irish race, and would say, with a laugh, that she had not one drop of non-Catholic blood in her veins. During a century and a half, English, Scottish and Irish Catholic gentlemen were debarred by the Test Act from all public service, military or civil, and if they wished to have a commission in army or navy, or to be in the diplomatic service, had to migrate to the Catholic kingdoms of France, or Spain, or Austria. For this reason some of the Dillons, relatives of Jane Mary, had long been naturalized in France. One of them was the celebrated Count Edward Dillon, "le beau Dillon," who was put to death at the head of his own troops, a victim to the Revolution. In his early days in Paris, Kenelm Digby knew the old widow of "Beau" Dillon, a lady who had once been Ambassadress of France in Florence. He knew also the Countess de Rochefort, who came of Dillon blood.

> "Aged, but still sprightly, beautiful e'en yet,
> And one whom no one ever could forget." [1]

Jane Mary Dillon herself had been educated in France and spoke French perfectly.

Kenelm Digby used to go to evening receptions and balls at Lansdowne House in London, and there first he met his future wife. One night he was with a party,

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VI.

including the girl, at a theatre. Next morning he started for Cambridge on a mail coach, but had not gone ten miles before the desire to see the lovely being became too strong for him. He slipped off the coach, leaving his luggage to go on, and walked the ten miles back to London. The loved one had, he found, departed to Ramsgate in the Isle of Thanet. Kenelm followed, with "sudden, unexpected, firm resolve," that which comes to true lovers of the divine or human like an inspiration; and there she became his betrothed. In one of his later poems Kenelm attributes his success to his writings—the *Broadstone* or the first volumes of the *Mores*. He says of Jane Mary:

> "To learning grave she opes the door
> And sets great value on its store,
> All she deems merit wins her grace
> And finds in her a resting place;
> Her not with gold or jewels I
> Could erst have moved, so tender, shy,
> But what she thought a gracious book
> Prevailed on her on me to look,
> For her it was a poem bland;
> She yielded me her heart and hand." [1]

But probably it was less the "grave learning" than the wild personal charm of the chivalric Kenelm that won the heart of the young Irish girl. They were both of Ireland, she of the early Norman-Irish breed, he of the later Anglo-Irish.

They were married at Dover "in a kind of granary which served the few Catholics at that time for Chapel." "The children of the place," Kenelm Digby wrote long after, "might have sung before her, with Jasmin, while

[1] *Chapel of St. John*, p. 25.

throwing a few flowers or green leaves upon the pavement,

> 'Les chemins devraient fleurir,
> Tant belle épouse va sortir ;
> Devraient fleurir, devraient grener,
> Tant belle épouse va passer.' "

They drove on their wedding day about twenty miles, over the high chalk downs and then across the marsh levels, and up the chalk again, to Ramsgate.

Jane Mary was beautiful and charming, natural, loving, deeply religious, penetrated through and through by the spirit of the Catholic faith. Digby inserted in the fourth chapter of the first volume, published in 1851, of his book named *Compitum*, the following "mere sketch by a rude hand" of his wife, without naming her :

"When she hears of the death of any one whom she has ever known, however slightly, and who she thinks has not left any pious friends, she sends to the nearest church to have mass said for his soul. When she hears of any one being sick, besides sending all temporal assistance, she has masses offered for his recovery. The devoted suppliant of blessed Mary, to one who spoke before her of exceeding the due limits, she replied, with an earnestness that might have raised a blush for having uttered such suspicions, 'It is always in the name of Jesus that we ask for everything ; but we implore the intercession of his blessed mother.' Her views of all events are supernatural ; and therefore sometimes, while the weak and worldly lament, she seems to triumph, though indeed the tears that overflow her eyes prove that the human affections still live within her heart. Her scrupulous love of truth and justice appears in the least things, as well as when the consequences would demand from her an immense sacrifice. Her zeal for God's glory renders the most timid the most

courageous of hearts. The very officials of great temples instinctively obey her directions when as a stranger she denounces an abuse. Of the utmost delicacy of constitution, she endures with cheerfulness whatever can occur to cause displeasure. 'It does not disturb me, I am no fine lady' is her smiling answer to those who would remove it. Still young, she has conquered both the world and herself, rendering it impossible to suppose that God would ever have placed so much virtue in a juvenile heart, if eternal felicity was not prepared in another life for those who resemble her. Not from the day when on this earth I first beheld her charms have I ceased to follow her with an interior and applausive song."

The following much earlier passage also, in the volume of *Mores Catholici* published in 1837, tells of Jane Mary:

"One I have known, who not from the day when on this earth I first beheld her charms, has ever ceased with inward song adoring to converse with Christ, his blessed mother, and the saints. O thou pure and loving soul, what will it be after so many prayers, so many genuflexions, so many stolen vigils in the stilly night, so many communions prepared for with all thy poor strength, so many kisses bestowed upon the crucifix and holy relics ever next thy bosom, so many Aves muttered on the beads, so many tears and prostrations while singing 'Tantum ergo' and 'O Salutaris Hostia' at the benediction of each closing day, which to thee even in youth was joy, mirth, rapture, everything,—what will it be, I say, after all this life of expectation and desire infinite, of alternate joy and sorrow, of light and darkness passing through the heart, to behold thy God, where days end not, where blessed moments change not, where the vision of glory fades not through eternal years? O spirit, born for joy, who, in the rays of life

angelic, dost already taste that sweetness, what will be thy radiance then? And where will be the poor heart dwelling within this dust that can now only wonder at thy beauty?" [1]

This was written when Jane Mary was hardly twenty, although she had already been a wife for three or four years, and a mother. After her death in 1860, Kenelm Digby consecrated to her portrait a whole volume, the really beautiful though forgotten book entitled, *The Chapel of St. John, or A Life of Faith in the Nineteenth Century.* Neither in this book does he ever mention her marriage surname, nor ever say that the writer is her husband, but the book records every shade of her manner of life, tastes, actions, and ways of looking at things. No picture of a wife so complete and minute has ever, I think, been drawn by a husband, nor one so complete of a true Catholic woman, living in the world. The present memoir is intended chiefly to direct the attention of those who do not already know them to the writings of Kenelm Digby; and, with *The Chapel of St. John* in existence, it would be foolish to attempt to draw in these pages a new portrait of the adorable soul flowing over with love and *bonté* and generosity, fed, as it were, from within by streams of Paradise, and diffusing them through her surrounding world.

The mother of Jane Mary, the widow Marcella Dillon, lived with the Digbys until she died, the same year as her daughter, in 1860; and as neither Kenelm nor his wife possessed the smallest business capacity, the practical Marcella was of much service to them in managing their worldly affairs. Digby says of her in *The Chapel of St. John*:

[1] *Mores Catholici,* vol. viii. p. 570.

"She was a lady of most confirmed honour, of an unmatchable spirit, and determinate in all virtuous resolutions; yet shrinking from the employment of an influence which attached itself irresistibly to her own merit, she would be just against herself, and fearful of using what another would long to use without deserving to possess it. . . . A poet paints to the life this venerable lady when he says:

> 'Hers was
> A mounting spirit, one that entertained
> Scorn of base action, deed dishonourable,
> Or aught unseemly.
> Wise she was
> And wondrous skilled in genealogies,
> And could in apt and voluble terms discourse
> Of births, of titles, and alliances;
> Of marriages, and inter-marriages;
> Relationship remote, or near of kin;
> But these are not her praises, and I wrong
> Her honoured memory, recording chiefly
> Things light or trivial. Better 'twere to tell
> How with a nobler zeal, and warmer love,
> She served her heavenly Master.'"

But the affairs and alliances of families are not really by any means "things light or trivial," they are of the essence of life; nor is the knowledge of them a science to be disdained. We do not, perhaps, nowadays, give enough credit to the part which feelings of pride, or interest, in race have played in maintaining a standard of energy and duty and honour. Old ladies should be the priestesses who preserve the records of this religion of the family, and keep it alive in the hearts and minds of the young. Patriotism begins at home, and one chief motive which makes men strive to serve their country is the desire to raise and adorn their family name.

Kenelm Digby's eldest son was born in 1835, and,

after that, came other children. Seven, in all, were born before 1849. These years were spent partly in a house in the Rue de Lorraine at St. Germain near Paris, partly in various apartments in Paris, and partly in different places in England, in summer-time and autumn; such as Clifton, Bath (at 19 the Circus), or Tunbridge Wells, or near the New Forest. Few married people, except soldiers or Anglo-Indians, have lived in so many different houses as the Digbys, until they settled down in Kensington in 1857.

In 1842 a thing happened which might easily have brought the family to an end altogether. They were then living in a house called Springfield House in "the Paragon," in the outskirts of Southampton. The Oxford Movement had now begun to bring a few converts to Rome, and one of these early ones was the Rev. Mr. Sibthorpe, a Fellow of Magdalen College, a disciple of Newman. He was received into the Church in October, 1841. This step was less frequent than it became soon afterwards, and Mr. Sibthorpe was viewed with indignation by Protestants. The new convert arrived at Springfield House on a visit to the Digbys, on Saturday, 1st January, 1842. On Sunday a sermon was preached in a local dissenting chapel in which the congregation were told that Mr. Sibthorpe "deserved to be burned." On Monday afternoon Mr. Sibthorpe left. Next morning at 2 A.M. the house was found to be on fire; the family were fortunate to escape with their lives, and everything in the building was destroyed, including volumes of manuscript notes by Kenelm Digby. Affidavits made at the time show pretty conclusively that the fire was not accidental but malicious. Suspicious persons had been seen the

evening before prowling about the place, and the house had evidently been entered through a ground-floor window and fired. And the worst of it was that Mr. Sibthorpe after all was not worth the sacrifice, for he was a weak character, and presently reverted to Anglicanism.

II

The Revolution of 1848 ended Digby's abiding in Paris, though to the close of his life he made frequent visits to that city.

"One beautiful summer day," he says in *Compitum*,[1] "the stranger" (Digby) "was serving as a guide to two venerable priests and an illustrious friend, long versed in diplomatic life, through the forest of St. Germain. He was looking at the stately trees and the beauteous flowers, and inviting his companions at every step to admire their grandeur and their loveliness. The visitors, for they had only just arrived from the capital, were holding sad, foreboding talk on the probability of fresh political disturbances and new woes prepared for their unhappy country. 'But look,' said the stranger, deeming their apprehensions at least exaggerated, 'look at the heights beyond this forest. See the wooded uplands of Marly, and the vast chestnut trees on Montaigu.' Insensible to the invitation, they gazed mournfully at those solemn groves. He wondered at their obduracy, but lo! in a few months the horrors of revolution burst, not only upon that devoted land, but upon nearly the whole of Europe."

In June, 1848, Kenelm Digby once more heard the voice of cannon in Paris. His last son, John Gerald,

[1] Vol. v. p. 306.

had just been born, and doctors advised that in such dangerous and menacing times it would be best, for his wife's sake, to leave Paris. They packed up hastily and drove away, effacing the Digby arms, which contained the reactionary fleur de lys, upon their carriage, to escape the wrath of the mob, and found, as Digby says, in England the true Liberty, Equality and Fraternity for the idea of which blood was being vainly shed in Paris.[1]

The Digbys passed two or three years after 1848 first at Clifton and then at Tunbridge Wells, and then in 1851 took a house at Ramsgate, where they lived until the end of 1856. It was Number 2 Royal Crescent, at the western end of Ramsgate, a crescent of early-Victorian houses, with a large and cheerful common garden in front, good to pace in after breakfast, with a cigar, in the sun and the finest air in England. Beyond the garden fence is a broad paved parade, at the edge of a steep chalk cliff, going down straight as a wall to the sea. From here is a noble view over wide distances of sea and land. At the western end of Royal Crescent stands the beautiful Catholic church which was built by Pugin, who lies there buried, at his own expense. It had been begun in 1847, and was opened for worship in 1851. It is not a large, but a nobly massive, church, and has been called "Pugin's gem." He intended it to be a parish church, but when the Benedictine community, trained for the purpose at Subiaco, came in 1856 to Ramsgate, and founded the now adjoining monastery of St. Augustine, the church was attached to it.

Kenelm Digby loved this Kentish region, in which,

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VII.

near twenty years earlier, he had begun his happy married life. He has left a beautiful description of the scenery in his book, the *Chapel of St. John.* The passage is long, written in his leisurely style, which some, possibly, may find reposeful in these days of impressionist and staccato writing; and as the book is scarce and not easily obtained, some readers, especially those who know East Kent, may be grateful if I quote it here. Digby says, then :

" Passing down the Thames, or crossing the land in a more southerly direction, we come to that region of England which Tacitus describes as being in its climate, and even in the manner of its inhabitants, more similar than any other of its districts to those of France. One breathes, certainly, along its white cliffs, which in the shades of evening assume a dusky hue, a more elastic air ; the sky is generally clearer, and you perceive as much of that magic splendour of the sun as our northern latitudes can ever enjoy. It is not indeed that we can hope to be presented with such a spectacle as is offered by the enchanted coast of Chiaja, or by the shores of the island of Capri, or even by those of our own Devonshire, but that in reality there is no part of the British Islands where the climate so nearly resembles that of the Continent. Nowhere is there more effulgence of that

πάντων
Αἰθὴρ κοινὸν φάος εἱλίσσων.[1]

And as, after all the deficiencies of the general scenery, there is ever before your eyes the blue sea and an unobstructed horizon, with a sky that is most frequently clear and cloudless, there is enough to refresh and satisfy those who from time to time experience a want

[1] " Pure essential air, the common light of all circling things." Aeschylus in *Prometheus Vinctus.* The Greek word Αἰθήρ needs adjectives to give its meaning in English.

to soliloquize a little while gazing, as we say, on the face of nature. Besides there are certain indentures of the coast which present the appearance of bays, that are by no means without picturesque beauty. Then you have also, intersected by long dykes and almost blending with the sands, vast marshy tracts, over which herds of cattle wander, forming a landscape full of attraction for those who have a taste for Cuyp scenery, and not less for those who in a boyish way are enamoured of the brooks and rushes and the green lowlands, and are fond of spending hours thus with a dog or two and some choice companion amidst the calm of rural solitude, while hearing, as they saunter along, what the old poet calls

ποντίων τε κύματων
Ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα.[1]

"Then from plains that gently rise above these salt-marshes the amplest range of prospect may be enjoyed—low brown or purple tracts, where a winding river stagnates, are stretched out westward; beneath, right at the cliff's southern base, you have the ocean breaking audibly, not far distant from the Goodwins; and south of them, far away in pale-tinted regions, forming a long ridge, that some might take for a perishable cloud, you behold the coast of France, the cultivated fields that streak its tawny summits, its churches, and even its golden image of the Virgin shining from a dome, being at all times discernible, while the revolving lights, after sunset, cast a fitful gleam upon the dark waters from its desert capes. Again, looking northward, you have the open champaign country, which has also a certain beauty of its own, constituting what a great author[2] distinguishes as that of field-lands, which, though capable only of an inferior and material art, and apt to lose its spirituality, present, however, the

[1] "Innumerable laughter of ocean waves." Aeschylus, *Prometheus Vinctus.*

[2] Ruskin.

advantage of having sight of the whole sky, and of the continued play and change of sun and cloud, and also of greater liberty, being like the moss-lands, at least at certain seasons, the freest ground in all the world, while commanding all the horizon's space of changeful light. On a spring morning the voice of waters must here be softened down into a vernal tone; a spirit of desire and enjoyment, with hopes and wishes from all living things, must seem to pervade the entire region. Beast and bird, the lamb, the shepherd's dog, the linnet and the lark, must appear to be all complying with their Creator's invitation to rejoice and be happy.

"Some, who in later months of the fine season chance to walk alone beneath these cliffs at sunrise, or above them with this sauntering crowd, that, like one family, is listening to music under the rising moon, are not left without memories of affections old and true. At all hours, inland for many a mile, the elm-grove murmurs with a sea-like sound, though still the habitual sight of fields with rural works is cheerful. Far towards the north-western limits of your view, lies an ascending country, dappled over with shadows flung from many a summer cloud; those many spots lie in long streaks determined and unmoved, with steady beams of sunshine interposed, pleasant to him who on the soft cool moss extends his wearied limbs.

"Now is the day declining, and the faint evening breeze plays on the meadow. Why is there not a Claude here to see and paint these groves and these long undulating tracts which mount up to purple elevations, with the zig-zag road that breaks the uniformity of tone, and leads to these mills that stand like towers for a sea-mark? How would an artist have delighted in this foreground too, of rich entangled weeds, with its goats and sheep, and the rough dogs that watch them! Then, sufficient in itself to form a picture, you come ever and anon to some old broken bridge

across a rivulet, seeming to be half rock, half brick, here covered with plaster, there lined with weeds and beautifully interwoven plants ; beyond it are the fields, now undistinguishable, as they are fast darkening in the twilight, while the horizon is coloured with the lovely hues of sunset, diffused higher up amidst some rosy clouds, fringed with gold, thinly floating motionless in an azure so calm and profound, that you can hardly imagine its being anything else but heaven.

" So, without anything that an untrained eye would deem in the least remarkable, our travellers find themselves, they know not how, soothed and satisfied—a few tufts of pine or elm, the blue or warm radiance of a lake-like bay, a meadow or a corn-field, the edge of a cliff, and the distant shores that mingle with the clouds—such is the nature that contents them.

" Disdained by some, as being thronged in summer with a motley crowd of Shakspeare's ' Sunday citizens,' the whole scenery of the district recommends itself to those who hold with a great authority in matters of art, that ' all true landscape, whether simple or exalted, depends primarily for its interest on connexion with humanity, or with spiritual power,' [1] and that even ' fragrant tissues of flowers, and golden circlets of clouds, are only fair when they meet the fondness of human thoughts, and glorify human visions of heaven.'

" Nor is the interest attached to historical recollections wanting to this region ; for on one of these upper solitary plains the Anglo-Saxons had their place of solemn burial. Here first Caesar saw Britain, and here Augustine landed to bring light and immortality."

This is a beautiful and true description of scenery which moved Hasted, the eighteenth-century historian of Kent, to more prosaically expressed enthusiasm. He says of the superb view from the chalk down above

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters.*

Minster over all this region, the most interesting view in England :

" From this place may be seen not only this island [of Thanet] and the several churches in it ; but there is a view at a distance of the two spires of Reculver, the island of Sheppey, the Nore, the mouth of the river Thames, the coast of Essex, the Swale and the British Channel ; the cliffs of Calais and the kingdom of France ; the Downs and the town of Deal, the bay and town of Sandwich, the fine champion country of East Kent, the spires of Woodnesborough and Ash, the ruins of Richborough Castle, the beautiful green levels of Minster, Ash, etc., with the river Stour winding between them, the fine and stately tower of the cathedral of Canterbury, and a compass of hills of more than one hundred miles in extent, which terminate the sight."

So that, when you are on the hill above Minster in Thanet, you know where you are, locally and historically. But it seems to me that this view is now less clear than when Kenelm Digby saw it, or when I myself saw it as a boy. One seems less often to see the coast of France with that wondrous distinctness. This may be due to the increased smoke emitted by the far more numerous steamships in the Channel and, in some winds, to the coal-mines of the Pas de Calais. And now East Kent, once so purely rural, except for its fringe of cheerful and not too large sea-side towns, is threatened by its own coal-mining and consequent developments, and places once sweetly untouched, like Sandwich and Ebbsfleet and old Reculver, are in danger of being destroyed by sea-side villa building. The delicious low shell-strewn shore from Sandwich to Pegwell Bay is no longer quiet and unfrequented, and behind it during the War has arisen an unnatural

kind of town, erected by Government. It is a pity, but apparently the progress of "Civilization" cannot be arrested. Descendants may be sadly glad that Kenelm Digby knew this region in its more Arcadian days, and has left in writing so lovely an impression. Those who visit this land fifty years hence, when it may have become a black industrial country covered with chimneys and slag heaps and mining and smelting villages, may like to have this description of it when it was still one of the most peaceful, untouched, and rural parts of England.

III

These years, from 1848 to 1856, spent in English rural places, especially those five, until the last, at Ramsgate, in the fine, cheerful-making air of East Kent, were, surely, the happiest in Kenelm Digby's life. He was now in the first half of his sixth decade, a season corresponding to the bright and reposeful and fruitful month of September in the English year. There is less gaiety than in spring, but also more certain warmth and no really bitter winds. Then his family was now in its fullest and most perfect bloom, almost intact and all together. Every family has its most perfect moment. The Digbys had lost one child, Frances Mary Venetia, who died at eighteen months old, but they brought six to Ramsgate. Their names were in this order of birth: Thomas, Marcella, Kenelm, Mary Anne Letitia, John Gerald, and Mary, boys and girls alternating so as to form a most pleasing garland. Kenelm Digby says much of this family in his book of 1858, called *The Children's Bower, or What you like*. The family were the more united and homogeneous because none of them

had been sent away to boarding-schools or convents; they had all been educated at home by tutors and French governesses. They had had the education given by a cultivated home, and, in the case of the elder ones, by intimate touch with some good French families and priests, and that which is given by living in more than one beautiful or interesting place. Digby says:

"The imagination of these children and youths had been nourished by places rendered beautiful both by nature and by art. Moderately, not greatly, favoured in this respect, they had not seen Italy, they had not seen even a mountain. From their window was not beheld, as from that of Titian's house at Venice, the chain of the Tyrolese Alps, where every dawn that reddened the towers of Murano lighted also a line of pyramidal fires along that colossal ridge; but they were familiar with such scenes as delight Ruskin—the beautiful grove of aspen poplars, the fountain and the meadow—as meet the eye of the traveller every instant on the much-despised lines of road through lowland France, scenes to them, as to himself, quite exquisite in the various grouping and grace of their poplar avenues, casting sweet tremulous shadows over their level fields and labyrinthine streams. On the continent they had seen what he ascribes to its scenery, comprising works of human art, the links unbroken between the past and present, the building as at St. Germain des Près and Calais tower of the eighth or tenth century standing in the open street, the children playing round it, no one wondering at it, or thinking of it as separate and of another time, the ancient world, a real thing and one with the new, being all continuous. Then they had seen smiling plains, solemn churches, the wood of Boulogne when it was wild and solitary, the forest of St. Germain, Marly and Montague, where they were all 'assueti silvis.' Thomas, mounted on his

fiery little charger, knew every path and pass of those woods extending to Versailles, as well as if he had been one of those king's pages that the ancient friends of his family had been in their youth, and whose adventures they used to describe to him so often that he might almost have thought that he had lived himself in those times. Then the whole party knew later Clifton with its rocks and downs, then the upland wilderness of Tunbridge Wells, lastly the Sandwich marshes, so frequented by the strange water-fowl that Bewicke copied, and the adjacent harbour with the sea-roads of that town[1] which from the cliffs, whose sides are yearly wasted by the deep, St. Augustin's grey massive tower dominates; town of midsummer mirth, if you will, town of children and of those who in their cheerfulness resemble them, as if each thought himself again a child, but town of humanity, with all the virtues which that word implies, sorrow for the dead being one here by me most gratefully remembered, town not deserving, like that Italian city, the epithet Superb; not proud, not ambitious, like so many others where arrogance and grandeur keep their vain, melancholy state; but only an unpretending sunny place of simple and, literally, childlike recreation for the common inhabitants of London, aspiring, like one family, after nought but air and mirth, health and freedom, gathering shells on summer eve, ladling sand, and breasting the ocean wave."[2]

The eldest boy, Thomas, usually called Tom, had reached the age of twenty-one in 1856, the last of these happy Ramsgate years, and had just received a commission in the army. He was the young hero of the family, "tall, gay, gallant, the pride of all these young hearts, though himself the humblest of the humble; the lover of horses and boats, and nets and guns, the

[1] Ramsgate. [2] *Children's Bower*, ch. v. p. 141.

gentleman, as common persons that know him say, 'every inch of him.' The gay songster, and the skilled on the sweet silver cornet. The inspirer of joy wherever he enters."

Next came Marcella:

"We must try to imagine dignity and grace combined in a tall girl, with a mind well-stored, like those we read about in medieval histories, as skilled in many tongues, and able to discourse with scholars in their own Latin; possessing a deep heart of nature's moods of grandeur and solemnity, and light and shade

> 'With each anxious hope subdued,
> By maiden's gentle fortitude
> Each grief, through meekness, settling into rest.'

Words which I picked up from a verse which I happily did not cast away, though little suspecting that I should live to have need of them, when we were to see her one day like sorrow's monument." [1]

After Marcella came Kenelm, "grave and courageous, serious and firm, very steady," and after Kenelm came Mary Letitia, "a gentle tall one, a creature flowing with what might appropriately be termed the 'oil of gladness,' oleum laetitiae, a sensitive creature, whose little girlish fears it is delightful to behold, a child of nature, with a heart inspired with the love of all beautiful, all glorious, all quiet, or impassioned things."

Then came John Gerald, who was eight years old in 1856, "the sweetest companion that ever man bred his hopes out of, so loving and so joyous that none need dread the depth of his dark meditative eye." He was one of those youngest children, whom one sometimes sees, in an affectionate family, whose love and

[1] *Children's Bower*, vol. i. p. 44.

gaiety seem to be brought out in an uncommon degree under the sun of so much concentrated and united affection. The "visible angel of the house" his father calls him.

Lastly came Mary, the only one of this fair ring of children who still lives on this earth. "How vivid, how delicate her glee!" says her father. "How arch, how frolicsome! No living man need fear the worst of fortune's malice, were she at his side, wanting only a wand to be a fairy."

So this happy group lived these few years at Ramsgate, riding and hunting, boating, fishing and swimming, rambling over the cliffs, sands, and marsh-levels, studying and reading and singing, frequenting mass and vespers and benediction at the beautiful new church of St. Augustine.

Looking back, when he was half-way between seventy and eighty, upon this delightful time, Kenelm Digby wrote in his poem *Ouranogaia, or Heaven on earth*:

> "Oh! say what is thy children's bower
> But Heaven here in a finite hour?
> For me to think of little John
> On earth, then Heaven with it is one.
> Letitia, Mary, Thomas, me,[1]
> Did spread around felicity;
> Neither was tall Marcella found
> A flower foreign to such ground;
> Nor yet Kenulmus, ever grave,
> And less inclined to romp and rave,
> But all enjoyed, and did impart
> Of these bless'd fields not small a part."

But now came the first of the great blows which were to break up the happy circle. Little John Gerald, in

[1] A Saturday Reviewer was very severe upon this bold inversion, and indeed it does need apology.

his ninth year, was caught by a malignant fever, and died eight days later, on the 25th June, 1856.

A few Sundays earlier his father had looked at him during Benediction in the Abbey Church. He beheld him "with his little head bowed down, and forehead resting on the rail, so innocently and so devoutly praying" that his father turned away his eyes, as if they were "not worthy to sustain the vision of such pure innocence." Little John seemed to have a presentiment. He used to talk of being in heaven first, and seeing his elders come there after him.

"There was a song he used latterly to sing, laughing, every day at the dining-room door, where he waited to see pass one whom he greatly loved. This was the burden of it :

'Oh Maunie,
When I am dead and buried,
Cry no more for me.'

"Every Sunday he used to walk with Anne, one of the domestics. Shortly before he sickened he bought for her a broach set with forget-me-nots. 'Oh, how pretty!' she exclaimed. He replied, 'You will soon have a handsomer one.' Three weeks after, she received a valuable gold broach filled with the dead boy's hair. The last present that he gave his good young governess was a little print of his own choosing, representing a Trappist digging a grave, with this inscription, 'To-day for me, to-morrow for thee.'" . . .

The last day that the child heard mass, his father turned round to look at him in his corner, and

"almost shuddered, so struck was he with the boy's countenance. There was something in it more than gravity, and yet it was so sweet." . . . "The last time that little

John ever went to take a drive, he sat on the coach-box as usual. It was the day before he sickened. It was late in June, the carriage was open. 'Why are you so silent, John?' asked his mother, knowing how he used always before to like chatting with the coachman. John replied not, only smiled. 'He is full of thought,' said the driver, turning round and laughing. 'Why, mamma,' said John, 'it is only that I have nothing to say.'"

Kenelm Digby adds:

"Only to think of that little sweet soul left to meet death alone. Snatched from life, from mother, sisters, brothers, and all the charms of existence. He is driving out now through the dear scenes he loves, but next week he will have to travel alone beyond the stars into eternity. So God seems to communicate to him a sense of what he is about to witness. To-day he sees what he doats upon, the horses, and the fields, and the waving corn, but he heeds them not. He sits by the friendly coachman, with whom he loved to chatter, but speaks not. He sits before his mother, with looking at whom he could never be satiated, but he turns not a joyous face, as he was wont, to nod at her; he is silent. 'He is full of thought,' said the old coachman, laughing."

Kenelm Digby tells in the *Children's Bower* in moving words the last days and the end.[1] An hour after that, late at night, the poor father saw his two remaining sons

"seated in silence on the balcony of the next room. The casement stands open. 'Tis between twelve and one. The moon rises slowly over the sea. Those boys are watching it; not a word is uttered; only the distant wave is heard. O God, can he [the father] ever live

[1] *Children's Bower*, chap. v.

to forget that silence and that spectacle. 'A breath from the region of spirits seemed to float in the air of night.' Where now is his little companion? The brothers sat in silence gazing on it—one of them little aware that he was himself so soon to be initiated in the same mysteries of eternity. More than half the darkness now is past. Night will soon fly before the beam when poured on the hill. The young day will return, but John returns no more. It was an hour to look inward.

> 'While thoughts on thoughts, a countless throng,
> Rushed, chasing countless thoughts along.'"

A few days later the body of little John was buried at Hales Place, in St. Stephen's, close to Canterbury, in the vault of the old Catholic and Kentish family of the Hales. The funeral came by road some seventeen miles from Ramsgate. Kenelm Digby thus describes the tender-sad scene in his impersonal way:

"On a fine day, amidst all the triumph of the summer's youth, in a southern county of England, some strangers are passing outside the wall of a well-wooded park. The nightingale, the cuckoo, and the linnet, have long opened the beautiful season in these groves; the lark is singing overhead; only the heat at this hour suspends the full concert. It is Wednesday, the 2nd of July, 1856. But, lo, something must have happened lately in the neighbourhood not in visible accordance with this smiling serenity of nature. Many young men and other persons are standing silently in groups under the shade, collected round the ivy-bound gates of a long plane-tree avenue which leads to a great house, which is the well-known seat of an old historic family. A priest clad in his vestments, and many acolytes and children are waiting about the lodge, ready, it would seem, to do all rites that appertain to a burial. Several soldiers too are

straying about, while others of their company are expressing regret that they can wait no longer, as duty calls them elsewhere. The strangers stop and join the groups, as if they had no other occupation but to observe. At length, about two o'clock, between the dusky trees, and along the road through the open green, comes gliding on serene and slow, soft and silent as a midsummer's day dream, a funeral procession.

"There is a hearse with four tired horses and white trophies, preceded by tall bending vapoury plumes that wave their swan-like purity over the summer corn. There are two coaches, and all the horses seem to have come from far. The broad gate swings on its hinges. Some mourners alight. If there was a diviner of the future to whisper in your ear, you would take especial notice of that tall and handsome youth, wearing over his deep black a white scarf. As it is, they who know him remark his graceful, noble air, and think that it never struck them more forcibly than at this moment. You would say now how well he looks. You do not yet see death about him. . . . Then from the second carriage some women descend, all clad as maidens in their silvery livery, as if with mirth in funeral, and dirge in marriage, in equal scale weighing delight and dole. The coffin, of an ivory hue, as if white to figure purity, is then taken out, and borne on men's shoulders. The priest receives it processionally, and all move on, singing as they walk the funeral chant appropriated for those peace-parted souls who died in their innocence. The psalm, 'Praise the Lord, ye children,' is entoned with a clear voice; and to that music the little train moves up the avenue.

> 'How like a gentle stream shaded with night
> And gliding softly, with our windy sighs,
> Moves the whole frame of this solemnity!'

The view on both sides of the leafy aisle, which is fragrant with the perfume of a thousand flowers, that grow

within an open garden on one side of it, is smiling as if in spite of death. The groves at least seem happy.

Non canimus surdis; respondent omnia silvae.[1]

And, in fact, those who follow the train said later, that, after a long journey along scorching roads, and across vast, open, shadeless plains, and, latterly, through the streets of an adjacent city filled with strange faces, where, though all respected, no one recognized as his own the symbols of their ancient faith, on coming to this spot, where for ages it had reigned uninterruptedly, and where so many friends were waiting for them with their hymns, encompassed by the charms of nature, that seemed to join in with its own responsive voice, they felt as if they had reached the gate of that Paradise which was to receive the little one.

"But let us mark all as if we were unconcerned spectators. They move on. Observe their order. First glides the processional Cross, with its attendant acolytes carrying lighted tapers in their hands. Then

'Village girls in robes of snow
Follow, weeping as they go.'

The song is then changed to Our Lady's litany; the clergy preceding the body close the procession, which is like the subject of it, simple,—acolytes and schoolboys, a few women mourners in white, and thoughtful-looking soldiers compose the chief part of the train, but the avenue is lined on each side with people that in the burning sun walk with forgetful sadness. Arrived at the Chapel which adjoins the house, the coffin is laid down in front of the altar. An aged priest who had come with it places on it wreaths of flowers, while round it are arranged the customary lights. Then the choir sings 'Praise ye the Lord from the heavens,' and the organ, causing long pent up tears to burst forth, accompanies the chant. After this little office the procession

[1] "Not to the deaf we sing; the woods make answer to all things." Virgil, *Ecl.* 10.

is formed towards a monumental cave of death behind the altar. Here the coffin is sprinkled with holy water, and the cold vault fumed with incense. The poor remains are then deposited in their sacred resting-place, the priest taking off his own sacerdotal girdle, to offer it to those who let it glide down, as if he thought nothing too precious to use on such an occasion. The priest and his attendants then return to the altar, singing the Canticle of the Three Children, 'All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord,' and then, turning to the people, he speaks a few simple words, which for aught a stranger knew, might or might not be commonplace, while he seems to struggle with himself, as he looks at some before him, saying, 'Noli flere, noli flere, melior est dies mortis quem dies nativitatis.'" [1]

The writer gives some account of this little sermon, how the priest spoke of the goodness of the child, "that really heaven seemed about him, and yet that he had all the innocent graces of common youth, so that wherever he entered joy seemed to come in with him."

The groups melted away down the avenue, but some few lingered by the vault to take a last farewell, and scatter flowers.

Thus Kenelm Digby has illuminated in the darkness of the past this sad-sweet pageant of sorrow over sixty years ago. It is strange that a beautiful description of another funeral, twenty-nine years later, at the end of April this time, coming up the same avenue to the same chapel, remains in print, in the *Letters of Mary Sibylla Holland*, who was born the same year as Marcella Digby, and died a year earlier than her.[2] It was that

[1] "Weep not, weep not; better is the day of death than the day of birth."

[2] At page 102 of 3rd edition, published by Edward Arnold, 1907.

of Mary Hales, the last of that old Catholic and Kentish family, whose body was brought, also along the road from Thanet and through Canterbury, from her retreat at Sarre Court, to be buried with those of her ancestors. Probably, as a girl of about twenty, Mary Hales saw that child's funeral in 1856. In the Ramsgate days the two elder of the Digby children, Tom and Marcella, used sometimes to come over and spend a night or two at Hales Place. That house became in the 'eighties a College of the Jesuits, not allowed to have schools in France, and it now is a seminary of French Jesuits. From the seventeenth century, at least, the sacrifice of the Mass has there been continuously offered.

No one without experience knows what these heart-rending pains are. Happier those parents or sisters, whose dear young ones die suddenly on a distant field of battle, than those who see them die before their eyes.

"Impositique rogis juvenes ante ora parentum."

Three months later the Digbys, still at Ramsgate, received a new blow so crushing that they needed all the wonderful consolations of the Catholic religion. Their eldest son, the bright and manly Tom, died also. Like his little brother he seemed to have some presentiment. A few weeks before he sickened he said to a friend, "I like that black horse of mine. I wish he might be led after my body at my funeral." The last day that he hunted he came home early. He was thoughtful and grave. His bay mare, he said, refused to take leaps such as she had never before refused. Only once more he went out on horseback with his father (who also, after this, rode no more), and this time

came back lamenting that he had lost from his neck a locket containing little John's hair, and this went on troubling him. The last time he was ever out of doors, returning home, apparently in usual health, he met a friend who asked him where he was going. He replied, "I am going home to have my last sickness." He came home chilly and unwell, and early next morning desired to see the priest, who came and gave communion. Tom, also, had been seized by a malignant fever, and in nine days he died. "I know I am dying. I am quite happy," were among his last words.

"It is Sunday the 12th October. Slowly had that day passed in bitterness. The bell of the neighbouring church of St. Augustine now tolled for vespers. He grasped the habit of the young Benedictine who knelt by his side, and implored him not to leave him. There was another priest in the church to say them, and he did not leave him. Moreover to the last, too, he saw round him female heads that expressed 'sorrow, dignity, and faith in God.' In fine, recovering composure somewhat before the setting of the sun, he took his last leave of this fading light, and with his soul sought for beams eternal. Gently he breathed, and without a sigh expired, his face immediately assuming for a short interval a look of boyish beauty, which had distinguished his earlier years. . . .

"So the gay young English sportsman, the sweet, clean, noble gentleman, loved by all classes through an entire county, the bold horseman, the joyous songster, the friend so noted for his generous, delicate, open, and, in the old English sense of the word, merry heart, the familiar comrade of the local youth, the desired at every ball-room — after seeing twenty sweet summers died like a Bayard, like the Cid. . . ." [1]

[1] *Children's Bower*, vol. ii. p. 288.

Thomas Digby was buried close to the north wall of the Church of St. Augustine on the spot where his parents had already resolved to build an outside Chapel of St. John, and thither to bring back from Hales Place, as they afterwards did, the body of their little John Gerald.

CHAPTER IX

FAMILY LIFE—*Continued*

"Do what you will, and think what you will, but know this, and make up your mind to it, that from your cradle to your grave you move amidst a vast system of grief, where, if you yourself are spared, grief is mistress, making others pay that tribute which she disdains to accept from you. . . . Whatever be the reason for this being written, it is written, and by a hand apparently firm to its purpose. Oh! then, there is peace in acquiescing in this general order, in suffering willingly, in order that some one else may be relieved: for whoever so suffers, at the feet of Christ, removes suffering from another, in accordance with the principle of solidarity amongst us all." LACORDAIRE.

I

AFTER these sad events the Digbys left Ramsgate and went to live in London. They took one of those roomy, eighteenth-century houses with large gardens which were then to be found on the road from Kensington to Hammersmith. It was called Shaftesbury House, and stood on the south side of the road a little west of what is now the Kensington Underground railway station. The house has years ago been pulled down and the site covered by great shops. Here Digby lived till he died in 1880.

In his first year at Kensington he endured a new and bitter loss. Marcella, his eldest daughter, was of all his children nearest to himself in mind, tastes and interests. He had given her a strong education. She had learned, with her brothers, Latin and Greek, from their tutor,

a Cambridge convert and a fine scholar, and she had read much history and literature for her age. She loved the outdoor life, and especially riding, and was rather fond, too, of dress and jewels. But the sudden deaths, in 1856, of her youngest and her eldest brother had a tremendous effect upon this girl of nineteen. It was Marcella whom her father saw looking like "sorrow's monument." If this is life, she said, "it is better to give one's whole self to religion." She had also been much impressed by her father's defence of the monastic life in his books. She now asked his leave to become a Nun, and he refused to give it. Like Montalembert's charming and high-spirited daughter Catherine, to her father, when she had made the same resolve, Marcella quoted his own writings against him, silently handing to him, says Mother Pollen, a volume of *Compitum*.[1] Montalembert, when his daughter became a novice of the Sacred Heart, was heart-broken. Kenelm Digby was not the first, nor will be the last, father who has entered the Catholic Church, and has then seen his children go beyond him in devotion. That same attraction which brings some into the Church draws others on further still. It is, in this sense, a dangerous religion. But those who believe in, and therefore join, the Catholic Church, must be prepared to take all the consequences of their action.

What happened to Marcella is related in an MS. account of her written by a French nun of the Sacred Heart, which the Mothers at Roehampton have allowed me to see and to use. The writer was with Marcella in Chili, and saw her life and death there, and heard from her such recollections of the past as her reserved nature

[1] In her *Memoir of Mother Mabel Digby.*

allowed her to give. During an absence abroad of her father she obtained her mother's permission to make a Retreat, at a convent about thirty miles from London, conducted by a then well-known Jesuit priest. She told her desire to this priest, and asked him to direct her to a community which would receive her at once. He mentioned the Convent of the Sacred Heart, at Roehampton, but required her first to write to her mother telling her of this, and promising to conform with her wishes. Mrs. Digby replied that if Marcella were certain of her resolve, it would be best that she should go straight to the Convent, so as to decide the question without further painful discussion. Later, Mrs. Digby admitted that when, with many tears, she wrote this letter, she was persuaded that her daughter would not act upon it. But, as soon as the Retreat was ended, the resolved Marcella went straight to Roehampton, passing her Kensington home, sitting in a corner of a vehicle, well-shrouded in veils, so fearful was she of being seen. She used afterwards to speak of the anguish of this journey. This was in December, 1856.[1]

"Désormais," says the French MS., "on pût suivre dans cette âme si généreuse comme une double action, l'attraction victorieuse de son cœur elevé vers un dépouillement absolu, une immolation complète, et les revendications d'une nature fière, peu dominée et fantasque, mais que la grace et un amour ardent pour N.S. devait subjuguer entièrement et transformer."

Marcella for some time was occupied in small employments about the house. "She passed usually" (says

[1] I gather this date from what Digby says in the *Chapel of St. John*, pp. 305 and 311. She spent the following spring and summer at Roehampton.

the MS.) "the hours of leisure at the window of her room which looked on a meadow bordered with trees and enamelled with flowers. Numerous birds flew about, and our postulant regarded with envy these pretty neighbours, asking herself if she would have the courage to endure for ever the yoke of a voluntary captivity." From the window she could also see the road along which would come sometimes a groom of her father's, bringing letters or parcels, and that mounted upon her own darling horse. This was the bitterest trial or temptation of all, but she overcame these natural weaknesses by the conviction that she must fulfil the will of God. "Besides, when she was summoned to the parlour, she felt herself changed, in a way which she herself did not understand, and those of her family who came to visit her went away satisfied seeing her so calm and so happy." [1]

In September, 1857, Marcella was sent to the House of the Order at Conflans in France for her novitiate. Mabel Digby, about two years older than herself, had begun her novitiate at Conflans a few months earlier, and the two cousins were together there until 1859. On the 13th September, 1859, Marcella took her first vows there, and remained in that House for two years. She returned to Roehampton on 23rd September, 1861. "In the community," says the French MS., "she was silent and reserved; one felt that she experienced interior pains, and went to God by a way little usual. The

[1] St. Theresa, after describing the violence of the agony of parting from her parents, says:

"At the moment when I took the habit, God made me conscious how he blesses those who deny themselves for his sake. This internal struggle was known to him only; on the surface nothing appeared in my conduct but courage and firmness."

complete rupture in which her well-loved father persisted was for her heart a painful thorn."

Kenelm Digby had made no formal opposition to the reception of his daughter into the Order of the Sacred Heart, but he could not reconcile himself to the renunciation. Once he came to the Convent and asked to see Marcella, but did not give his name. The Mother Superior, in giving permission to Marcella to see the unknown visitor, directed the Mother Clifford to accompany her. Mother Clifford sat down by a remote table, and Marcella advanced towards the visitor. Marcella and her father looked at each other without speaking a word, and in a few seconds the latter took up his hat and walked out of the room. Then Marcella said to Madame Clifford, "It is my father." Kenelm Digby, mortified to see his daughter accompanied, on this first meeting since their separation, could not trust himself to speak, and Marcella was so taken by surprise by this sudden and unexpected appearance of the loved and long unseen father whose displeasure she had incurred, that she lost her presence of mind, and could not speak in time either. She did not, according to the French narrative, and if this correctly states what she told the Nun who wrote it, see her father again for years, till just before she started from Paris for South America, in 1876, never to return to England. All that can be said is that Kenelm Digby had suffered so much in 1856 that he could not yet endure this further loss, of the daughter most like to himself, and that he was deeply wounded by her flight without his consent. He thought that she and her mother had not been fairly, and that he had not been honourably, treated by the priest who advised her, or the Order who received her.

It may be suggested that it would have been wiser to advise Marcella, as her cousin Mabel had been advised at eighteen or nineteen, to wait for two or three years to test her resolution, and to see whether then she could gain her father's consent. I think that most experienced spiritual Directors would agree as to this. She was hardly twenty, and was acting under the influence of a very great and recent shock, the deaths of two brothers within three months, so that her father had a good deal of reason on his side. He would probably not have refused to assent two or three years later. Mrs. Digby also, perhaps, did not act in the most *judicious* way in advising her daughter. It is, however, difficult or impossible, and also unwise, to form a judgment on a matter like this, especially without knowing much more in detail what really was said and written, and I should not, perhaps, have said even so much were it not necessary, in directing attention to Digby's writings, to explain certain otherwise mysterious passages in the *Chapel of St. John* and in *Evenings on the Thames.*

Marcella might have quoted against her father one of his own favourite saints, the cheerful and far from austere Francis of Sales, who told a young lady, in like circumstances, that "if one had to obey the advice of parents in such matters few people would be found to embrace the perfection of Christian life." But, if Francis of Sales had had the conduct of this affair of Marcella, he would have managed it wisely and gently (*doucement* was his favourite word), so as to break the pain to a father's heart, or even to convert it into sad joy. In a memoir which has been printed of the English Jesuit who advised Marcella, it is written :

"The impression which his whole being conveyed was that of a strong and many-sided nature brought under by a great self-renunciation. One thing alone mattered to him, the extension of God's kingdom on earth. Everything else was secondary and could be brushed aside."

There is danger in a disposition so absolute, even from the point of view of extending the kingdom.

Kenelm Digby could not soon or easily reconcile himself to that which had happened, although he did, in the end, resume affectionate correspondence with his exiled daughter. Perhaps he had, all through a happy life, enjoyed his own free way too completely, and had not learned in the workaday world to accept the unavoidable. And greater joy in family life involves corresponding pains, no doubt.

In February, 1868, Marcella Digby was sent from Roehampton to Paris to the Convent of the Sacred Heart, in the Rue Varennes, since then destroyed. Here she worked with great devotion, but found some difficulty in keeping the French girls in order.

"Rien ne découragait cependant" (says the MS.) "notre chère sœur, qu'on trouvait toujours prête à s'effacer. La concentration de son caractère et l'oubli dans lequel elle affectait de vouloir vivre, ont fait que peu de personnes ont su pénétrer les aspirations de cette âme si belle qu'il fallait deviner en faisant la part d'un caractère original, qui était comme le voile jeté sur des vertus solides et un mérite réel."

Marcella Digby made her final profession at Paris on the 17th October, 1873. She had long ardently desired to be sent to a distant mission, and at last she was allowed to form one of the Sacred Heart Colony which in 1876 was sent to Chili.

"Rien ne peut rendre l'allégresse de M^me^ Marcella quand elle vit ses espérances réalisées. Son excessive réserve disparut pour faire place à une aimable expansion, et son courage en communiqua aux membres de sa famille réunis à Paris pour les adieux."

Marcella worked first at Valparaiso, and after 1882 at Lima. She taught girls, but no employment was too humble for her. Once when her Superior wished to release her from some humble and wearisome night task, Marcella said:

"Ma mère, vous ne savez pas quel bonheur c'est pour moi de me sentir au service de N.S. et le jour et la nuit."

"All that she had known and loved hardly now seemed to exist for her; it was literally that, following the counsel of the Apostle, our good mother wished to forget all that was behind her, but with the particular composition (*trempe*) of her character she would have done it with a pious excess, breaking entirely all relations with the old world, to lose and hide herself in oblivion" —had not her Superior made a rule to the contrary, and said she must sometimes write.

After 1884 Marcella was placed at the head of a Sacred Heart institution for coloured women. She wished to give her whole life and energy to the service of the poorest. The Chilian school-girls of the *bourgeoisie* declared that Mother Digby cared for no one who was not in rags. Some very poor and ragged girls sat sometimes in a dim corner of a certain room. Some young ladies ensconced themselves there one day, and Mother Digby, whose sight had become feeble, came toward them with extended arms and unwonted animation.

"Les étourdies" jumped out crying, "Now we know whom you love most, Mother."

So the years passed on. Once or twice she was able to go with some of the community in their school holidays to a rough kind of house they had in the country by the cliffs of the sea. Then she became more expansive and they saw how much she enjoyed the rural scenes and the solitude. At the end of 1890 her sight almost failed her; she had to give up playing the organ, and could do no more than sing in choir. In 1892 she fell ill, at the age of fifty-five, of a mild form of typhoid fever, too much for her exhausted strength, and received the last Sacraments. "And you will leave us to sing without you?" said the Mother Superior, by way of saying something. Marcella, with a vivacity out of keeping with her weakness, said, "Au Ciel, au Ciel, nous chanterons." She sent a message to the Mother General. "Tell her that I am happy to die in the Society, and in the Mission to which she sent me. Thank her again.—To die in the Mission, what happiness!" These were almost her last words.

Madam d'Arcy, of the Sacred Heart, who is still at Roehampton, tells me that she remembers seeing Mother Marcella Digby at the Rue de Varennes and being much struck by her.

"She was very tall, with a very striking Digby face, the forehead and eyes rather like our other Mother Digby, her cousin, whose life you have read. We walked about the beautiful garden, and I gave her some English news, to which she listened with a far-away look in her eyes. Our Mother Mabel Digby was then at Roehampton, and she was always glad to hear us speak of her, for even then she thought her very holy. I saw

Mother Marcella make her profession at Conflans. She begged to delay it far beyond the usual time because she considered herself so unworthy. But our Mothers would gladly have received her to profession even before the usual time, so convinced were they of her great virtue. I have often thanked God that I knew these holy and charming Mothers Digby."

A girl who enters the Order of the Sacred Heart adopts a life of deep interest, that of religion and teaching. But she can never again see her father's home, or have one of her own, gives up the world with all its adventures, chances, and varying interests and pleasures, must always be within the walls and gardens of a convent, except when she moves from one convent to another. It is a great renunciation, say what you will, and to none can it have been more so than to the well-born, beautiful and active girl who in 1856 was living in the cheerful home circle at Ramsgate, and riding with her father and brothers about the sunny Kentish downs and levels. Marcella gave up, not like some, a dull or sordid home, and disunited or unsympathetic relatives, but everything that was united and detaining, while yet good and innocent. Is it the call of God when some are drawn to make such sacrifices, and even, sometimes, to inflict bitter pain on their dearest ones ? One must believe so, if one is a Catholic. One dares not say, "No." What, after all, would Religion be if it meant merely social reform or mildly improved general morality, and did not sometimes urge the young, at least, into heroic and chivalrous action ? It is almost always the young ; after a certain age very few can do these things. It is that the greater reality kills the less. As in another sphere a great war makes diversions like tactic-politics

and many other things seem but the shadows they are, so a near and vivid apprehension of God makes everything, to those who have it, seem *relatively* unreal except his direct service and union with Him. This is why those who love this present world; not only those who love its corruptions but those who, like Kenelm Digby, love all its good and innocent pleasures, may, even if they are Catholics, instinctively resist the ultimate calls to a few chosen souls of the religion which is of this world and yet also of another world. It is an instinct of self-preservation, this resistance, which, no doubt, is also necessary as part of the divine scheme, if the world is to go on. The reason why the Catholic Church, centred in the Apostolic See, is in this sense dangerous to family life, as in the earliest centuries, is that by strongly settling all questions of order and discipline, and by firmly and unchangeably defining doctrine, it liberates souls for these higher flights, to which also it encourages them, thus bringing them, as it were, by solid Roman roads, rapidly and smoothly to the desolate border of that austere and solitary region where men, like Moses in the Wilderness of Horeb, most vividly apprehend the presence of God. These see around and above them no other visible and organic Church to which they could possibly transfer their allegiance, so that this question, at least, does not hold them up or delay them in their higher flight towards infinite Reality.

In the fifth volume of his *Monks of the West*, there are some sad and beautiful pages which Montalembert must have written with tear-dimmed eyes, thinking of his own darling daughter. He says at the end of his chapters about the Saxon nuns of England:

"Twelve centuries after the Anglo-Saxon maids whose devotion we have related, the same hand falls upon our homes, upon our desolate hearts, and tears away from us our daughters and sisters. Never since Christianity existed have such sacrifices been more numerous, more magnanimous, more spontaneous than now. Every day since the beginning of this century" (the nineteenth) "hundreds of beloved creatures have come forth from castles and cottages, from palaces and workshops, to offer to God their heart, their soul, their virgin innocence, their love, and their life. Every day, among ourselves, maidens of high descent and high heart, and others with a soul higher than their fortune, have vowed themselves in the morning of life to an immortal husband. They are the flower of the human race, a flower still sweet with the morning dew which has reflected nothing but the rays of the rising sun. . . . They are the flower, but also the fruit, the purest sap, the most generous blood of the stock of Adam, for daily these heroines win the most wonderful of victories by the manliest effort which can raise a human being above all earthly instinct, and mortal ties. . . . Thus they go bearing to God, in the bloom of youth, their hearts full of those treasures of deep love and complete self-renunciation which they refuse to men. They bury and consume their whole life in the hidden depths of voluntary renunciation, of unknown immolations. When this is done, they assure us that they have found peace and joy, and in the sacrifice of themselves the perfection of love. They have kept their hearts for him who never changes and never deceives, and in his service they find consolations which are worth all the price they have paid for them, joys which are certainly not unclouded, for then they would be without merit, but whose savour and fragrance will last to the grave. It is not that they would forget or betray us whom they have loved, and who love them. No; the arrow which has pierced our hearts and remains there has first struck through theirs.

They share with us the weight and bitterness of the sacrifice. Is this a dream, the page of a romance? Is it only history, the history of a past for ever ended? No, once more, it is what we behold, and what happens among us every day. The daily spectacle we who speak have seen and undergone. What we had perceived only across past centuries, and through old books, suddenly rose one day before our eyes, full of the tears of paternal anguish. . . . How many others have also, like ourselves, gone through this anguish, and beheld with feelings unspeakable the last worldly apparition of a beloved sister or child." [1]

Montalembert says that, while there are these deeds of heroic self-devotion, those who accept the teaching and example of Jesus Christ cannot doubt that whatever may be defects of the Church in other directions, it is animated by His divine life, and by the Holy Spirit. He ends these pages thus:

"Who then is this invisible Lover, dead upon a cross eighteen hundred years ago, who thus attracts to him youth, beauty, and love? who appears to their souls clothed with a glory and a charm which they cannot withstand? who darts upon them at a stroke and carries them captive? who seizes on the living flesh of our flesh, and drains the purest blood of our blood? Is it a man? No, it is God. There lies the great secret, there the key of this sublime and sad mystery. God alone could win such victories and deserve such sacrifices. Jesus, whose God-head is amongst us daily insulted or denied, proves it daily, with a thousand other proofs, by those miracles of self-denial and self-devotion which are called vocations. Young and

[1] Pp. 360-361 of vol. v. of the authorized translation into English (1861) of the *Monks of the West*. I omit a touching and beautiful passage which follows. It is almost too personal to Montalembert.

innocent hearts give themselves to him, to reward him for the gift he has given us of himself; and this sacrifice by which we are crucified is but the answer of human love to the love of that God who was crucified for us."

It is delightful and consoling to know that, at last, after this sorrow and trouble, all was well and in order between Kenelm Digby and his daughter Marcella. The following letter, so loving and so tender, was written by Marcella to her father from Valparaiso, dated "The Feast of Kings," at the end of December, 1879. In those days, before railways crossed South America, the journey was long, and if the letter reached him in time, it can only have been shortly before he died, on the 22nd March, 1880:

"My own dearest, dearest Father. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,—better late than never, I hear you exclaim. I wanted to wait for the holidays to have a little more leisure to chat with you at my ease, so this will be my excuse to-day. So accept it, like a dear, good father, as you are. On Christmas Day the Prizes were given, and the next morning early all the little pigeons flew away. It really seems more sensible, after all, that, with the real year, the scholars' year too should terminate, and so we can celebrate this holy festive season in perfect peace, around the Crib of Bethlehem. I was enchanted to hear that you had enjoyed another autumn at Pouliguen, and I do entreat of you to say all that is most affectionate and loving to our dear friends there whenever you write to them. I can never forget their kindness, and pray for them daily during the Holy Sacrifice. Tell me something about Kenelm Vaughan; it appears he is in Peru still, and expected to return here sooner or later. If so, I shall certainly see him, for he comes often to our Convent, they say,

and all are greatly edified by his fervour and sanctity. It will be quite a pleasant visit for me; it is such an event here to see any true-born Briton, or to hear our tongue in its native purity. So, if you have any message for your namesake it would also be an agreeable surprise for him, I am sure. His father, if I remember correctly, was and is still a great friend of yours. What news from England! How many conversions! Deo gratias et Mariae! But Germany is still under the iron yoke, is it not? and France rather agitated? Rare and far between are the tidings that reach me of co-temporary events, so never be afraid of prolonging your chat too much, or of exhausting my patience in reading your letters. On the contrary, send me a long journal of everything you think of, important or trifling; all will be welcome and gratefully received. I want you to feel me, though so far away, as ever at your side, and talk to me as you would if you had me there with you, for truly it is so, my dearest father. You cannot imagine how often, how fondly, I gaze upon you, for your image is vividly impressed upon my heart. Time and Distance, Oceans and Mountains, what are they, to intercept the close union of souls linked together by God's eternal chains of love! As for me, the bonds that unite us seem firmer and stronger, and more dear than ever. Have always on your table a letter commenced for the little absent wanderer from home, and, if it were but a word, add something to it every day, until the thickly covered sheets and the coming mail warn you to close the long-wished-for missive and send it to its destination. If you do so, and if it could please you, I shall do the same, though you might be bothered to have to read such trash. We are enjoying the beautiful season, while you are shivering over your blazing logs. Yet it will be early Spring when these lines reach you, and this thought delights me, for I know your objection to the frost and snow. May this note then greet you as pleasantly, dearest father, as the voice of the gentle

herald of Europe's bright season. We have no cuckoo here to sing for us, nor nightingale either, and the only feathered friends we have to cheer us with their voice are miserable in comparison to other countries. Anything so monotonous as their notes, so uncouth, so insipid, if I may say so, you cannot conceive. As I want to write to May, you must let me say good-bye, dearest father. May our dear Lord continue to bestow upon you his choicest gifts and every blessing during the coming year. Such is the fond and ardent prayer of your tenderly attached and devotedly loving until we meet never more to part daughter, MARCELLA M. DIGBY.

"Love to all the noisy little tribe around you, and to their Papa, with Aunty's best wishes to each and all, not forgetting old Anne, who has quite forgotten me, no doubt."

II

But now we must return to the year 1860. Mrs. Digby had suffered in 1856 the most crushing blows that can befall a mother, in the loss of the sweet vision on earth of her eldest son and her youngest. Then came all the trouble about Marcella, the loss of her girl, and, even more, the way in which her poor husband took this loss. He was, perhaps, like most men of poetic and artistic temperament, never quite easy to live with, in his changing and capricious moods—he seems to admit this himself in his *Chapel of St. John*[1]—and his gloom and vexation after the flight of Marcella must have been trying even to her love and faith. He says of his wife:

"The common sorrows of humanity in which she had been steeped, her faith could teach her to endure with calm courage. . . . But sorrows not sent her by God, as far as seemed to many probable, to spring out of the

[1] P. 318, etc.

very element of supernatural joy, but faith itself to be inordinately enlisted against her maternal heart . . . circumstances made to appear as if requiring a violation of what she thought she owed to others! This was a trial. For herself she was resigned to everything in advance; but then she feared to behold shocked the feeble understanding of another whom she loved only too well." [1]

A page, written two or three years later, in *Evenings on the Thames* (vol. ii. p. 471) shows that Kenelm Digby had come to feel that some, perhaps too much, self-regard had mingled with his pity for Marcella, hurried, as he thought, into the conventual life too young, without time for reflection, and in what might have been a passing mood, and with his pity for her mother who had lost her. "Whatever," he says of himself, "he may have thought, it may have been somewhat for himself all the while that he was feeling. When lives and memories are cemented together by affection, it is difficult to separate the sufferings that belong to each. No doubt a man pities himself a little at times."

Apart from these sufferings of the heart, Jane Mary had, perhaps, become a mother too young. Since she was sixteen she had borne seven Digby children, and her physical health was now worn out, although in 1860 she was only forty-two years of age. Poor mother! She said once to her husband, "I see many sweet little fellows, but somehow not one of them is like our little John."

On the 2nd January, 1860, her mother, Marcella Dillon, who had always lived with her, and had shared all her joys and sorrows, died at the age of seventy-two,

[1] *Chapel of St. John*, p. 324.

and was buried at Ramsgate, in the now finished Chapel of St. John, where her two grandsons, Thomas Digby and little John Gerald, whose body had been brought back from Hales Place, were already interred.

Public events combined with private sorrows and troubles to cloud her last days, for in 1860, the "militarism," then dominant in France under Napoleon III., very nearly brought on a war, for no good reason, between England and France, so recently allied in the war against Russia on behalf of the decaying Turkish Empire. Digby says of his wife, "Her last weeks beheld the whole nation in suspense. . . . Dover heights and Castle, beneath which the last week of her life was spent, sent forth each morning the thunders of experimental artillery." [1] Such a war would have been heart-rending to one so intimately connected with each of these great nations. Jane Mary felt that her life was near its close. She used to say, "in a careless way, 'I have suffered so many afflictions of late that I often think I shall die suddenly.' In her last months she used to say, 'I am not what I was. I feel my nerves shattered, my heart somehow affected; I shall never recover my former health; but what of that!'" [2] Digby says, "The last blows in fact had gone through and through poor Jane Mary's heart." After her death an Abbot who knew her well, wrote, "The departure of her mother and sons made her more and more sigh after her own rest. She has entered into it, and we are called on to rejoice."

Mrs. Digby became less and less willing to leave her house and garden in Kensington. "For myself," she said, when summer came in 1860, "I should be well

[1] *Chapel of St. John*, p. 325. [2] P. 342.

content with this sweet garden were we to remain here the whole season, but one must think you know of what the interest of the others requires." So in the middle of July the family went to Dover, the place of her marriage, for change of air. On Wednesday, 18th July, there was in the morning an eclipse of the sun, which she hardly seemed to notice, as she was finishing some household affairs. About three o'clock in the afternoon Kenelm Digby went out to roam over the hills with his two other children, leaving Letitia with her mother, when she called to him from her room. "The stairs were high and the others were already outside the door. For the first and only time in his life he did not hasten to her when she called him. 'Tis true a sweet girl's voice, echoing her mother's, replied from the top of the stairs that it did not matter. He ran out after the others, and from that hour never again did he see alive Jane Mary."

It had been agreed that they were all to meet at the Catholic Chapel at a certain time, and soon Mrs. Digby also left the house with Letitia, and they walked to a pier which stood east of the harbour, and here she sat down, and opened her book of prayer. It was the day of St. Camillus de Lellis, patron of those in their agony, and the collect runs, "Deus, qui sanctum Camillum ad animarum in extremo agone luctantium subsidium singulari charitatis praerogativâ decorasti, ejus quaesumus meritis spiritum nobis tuae dilectionis infunde ut in horâ exitus nostri hostem vincere, et ad coelestem mereamur coronam pervenire, per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum."[1] Presently Jane Mary

[1] "God, who hast adorned holy Camillus, for the aid of souls struggling in the last agony, with singular prerogative of charity, we pray thee by

suddenly said to her daughter, "Poor dear, ever since thy birth thou hast had sufferings and sorrows." Then they went to the Catholic Chapel, and she prayed some time before the altar. After half an hour she left the Chapel, and had hardly walked a few steps before a poor woman, to whom in former stays at Dover she had often given charity, who had also been in the Chapel and followed her out, saw her stagger, and running to her made her sit down on a stone. Her daughter and maid, who had been in the organ loft, went out, and missing her, found her there; they called a passing carriage, and drove homewards. Very soon the palpitations of her heart became worse, and she said she must alight. She entered a chemist's shop opposite, and asked the chemist, whom she knew, for a glass of water. Shown into the back shop, and lying on a sofa, she reclined her head upon her daughter's breast, and then said, "Is it possible that this can be dying?" She was heard, as in the carriage, praying, uttering "Jesus and Mary," and repeating the "Memorare" to the last instant. Her husband arrived a few minutes later.

"There she lay, with eyes that are now dimmed by death's black veil, though still her old accustomed smile lingered upon her face; the loved one, she who 'clave to her,' standing motionless at her feet; the poor woman kneeling at her head, kissing the scapular which had been round her neck, but had now fallen from within her dress, and with expanded arms praying, and proclaiming with a sort of ecstasy that she was in heaven. Besides these two no-one present. In death quiet,

his merits, infuse into us the spirit of thy love, that in the hour of our death we may deserve to conquer the enemy, and attain to the heavenly crown through our Lord Jesus Christ."

gentle as she lived. . . . Truly a celestial blazon never yet conceived in heraldry. Supporters of a novel kind, and very appropriate, Weakness, with tender devotion in the person of her child, and Holy Poverty in that of the grateful beggar. In life she loved the Poor; well, at her death she saw them thus. It is not every rich person who has at her death one of the poor of Christ, calling out that the soul departed must be in Abraham's bosom."

Then entered a Dominican friar, who happened to be passing by with the priest of the town, and said to Digby, "Trouble not yourself, it's all over now, and I promise you it is well with her; I knew her from a child."[1]

"How full of consoling thoughts," wrote to Digby a gentleman of ancient Catholic race, "is the departure of one whose whole life was directed towards heaven!" "Quelle noble fin et digne d'une telle vie!" wrote a French nobleman long intimate with her. "Entre la prière et la charité—sur l'épaule de son enfant et le sourire au bord des lèvres." Another wrote, "Je suis ému jusqu'au fond de l'âme. J'ai un mortel regret de n'avoir revu cette chère sainte que j'ai toujours et depuis tant d'années aimé tendrement." "I feel I have said nothing," wrote an English priest. "But then it is such a sorrow. No one but God can reach to the depths of such a grief." An old priest in Paris wrote that he had wept like a child, and said, "O my God! What a world is this! another name to add to my memento of the dead. O, my God, what a loss, and what sadness in this life!" "For myself too," wrote a Russian friend, "it is a most cruel loss, as I had from the bottom of my heart attached myself to that angelic person."

[1] *Chapel of St. John*, p. 356.

"As a benefactress, churches prayed for her, and by the desire of distant friends, many an altar in foreign countries heard whispered the name of Jane Mary. A solemn dirge for her soul was sung in the two monasteries at Subiaco, of St. Scholastica and St. Benedict, also in the monasteries of Praglia, Genoa, and Pierre-qui-vive, besides, by order of the Abbot, a daily mass, for a long while, at Ramsgate."

The body of Jane Mary was borne from Dover to Ramsgate along the very line of some twenty miles of road, over the chalk downs and across the marsh levels, "so full of tender poetry are the sternest events of life's drama," which on the day of her marriage had once beheld her pass as bride. What a different journey for Kenelm Digby, as he followed in this sad procession! She was buried under her Chapel of St. John, where lay the mortal remains of her two darling boys and of her mother.

Soon after this Kenelm Digby went to Paris, for a space, and sadly visited the Churches where he could so vividly recall her, especially Notre Dame des Victoires, "the sanctuary of her heart, where one might still seem to see her kneeling with eyes bedewed, you knew not whether with joy or pure devotion, and when you expected almost every moment to distinguish in the holy melody the sound of her sweet voice." He found all these places "embalmed, and in a human way, one might dare to say, sanctified, by her gentle memory. Her very smile would seem to meet one before each altar." He visited also again St. Germain, and roamed, disconsolate, through the forest so dear to his youth. "It would be in the deep and silent shade of the wood, in the green lanes of that sublime forest, and on the cheerful terrace where she used so often to sit and gaze

upon her children, that you can imagine the past, with all its incomparable attractions, returned with a sense of ghostly reality." He could see where she used to sit "to watch her eldest boy frisking on his pony, and the rest admiring him." He could see the "grass-grown street of 'Lorraine'" there, "where in happy days she lived with all she loved about her—the house now shut up, the very number changed." He could recall her "walking along the street with her mother every morning to and from the church, often with all her children about her, and her baby in the nurse's arms, herself smiling and so purely happy." Nor could he revisit without weeping "that parish church of the Stuarts in which she used to kneel."

III

A fifth great sorrow, and this the last, was to be added. Mary Letitia, the second daughter, had also, about the same time as Marcella, wished to become a nun, in the Benedictine Order, but had deferred this project in order not to leave her mother, or to increase the sorrows of her father. After her mother's death she undertook the household cares in Kensington. Now in 1861 she was found to be in a stage of consumption. Then for a year the disease seemed to have vanished, and immense depression in the father gave way to unwarranted hope. In 1863 the disease reappeared in an advanced form. She was taken for the summer to a country place. Nothing, however, availed, and Letitia died in the last week of December, 1863, on Holy Innocents' Day, making a little before, by special permission, her vows of profession as a nun in the

Benedictine Order. Her father describes her character and her departure from this world in his book named *Evenings on the Thames* :[1]

"Tall, most beautiful, with large and singularly expressive eyes, of exquisite grace in all her movements, so as to be regarded in that respect as a model by the French, and everywhere to be remarked for a singular delicacy, lofty and yet humble, producing an unaffected elegance of manner ; of an innocence that spoke to every one's heart, in her smile, in her voice, and in all she uttered, affectionate and playful like her mother, intensely loving, so as to have no rest through solicitude for others, she retained during twenty summers the qualities which had endeared the child to all who knew her. Latterly there was in her smile, as she passed you returning from Mass, an eternity of love of which certain eyes could hardly sustain the expression, accordingly they dropped before it. Heroic and uncompromising when it was a question of speaking the plain truth to people, she practised literally the precept of the rule of St. Benedict which says, 'Veritatem ex corde et ore proferre.'[2] Firm as granite when duty was in question, dissolved in tenderness when love alone had claims on her, living in a world of her own of sweet, deep, holy thoughts, endeared to all who had the faculty of appreciating the delicate and beautiful in its sweetest and most sublime expression ; admired by all for something that seemed to each, according to individual predilection, most prominent, by a brother for what he called her pluck, by a confessor for her innocence unviolated from the font, by a father for the qualities that he himself most wanted, and no doubt, as regards this last relation, it was so with others, between whom and her there may have been the attraction of opposition. . . . Her pleasures and enjoyments were charac-

[1] *Evenings on the Thames*, vol. i. p. 460.

[2] "To set forth the truth from the heart and mouth."

teristic. It used to be her pride to work with her own hands in embroidering for the ornaments of churches. . . . In the field, where seemed to be the only recreation that she cared much for, she was a dauntless and graceful rider. In music, which was for her more than an amusement, she proved herself a genius, but of the tenderest and highest order, ready to play anything that was asked for, but suffering all the while intensely if the strain did not correspond with the elevation and instinctive purity of her heart. In the sciences, to the study of which she was led by a strong natural inclination, skilled and even impassioned—but with what an angelic passion—to read the wonders of the stars, as if really it were from being herself a thing enskied. 'D'une constitution excessivement délicate,' said her venerable preceptor, 'd'un caractère ferme et résolu, d'un esprit réfléchi, méditatif, et propre aux études sérieuses, elle avait un goût prononcé pour l'astronomie. A peine âgée de vingt ans, elle avait fait, dans cette science, de rapides et surprenants progrès, qui faisaient espérer, pour un temps donné, des connaissances peu ordinaires.' Then, again, all who knew her had remarked her power, unconsciously possessed, of elevating souls, the moral influence which she exercised over others; her pensive sadness when confronted with evils in any form; her loyal and amiable sincerity in the daily intercourse of life; her intimate affinity with things innocent like herself. Worthy, indeed, of being noticed, was that peace which encompassed her, that child-like joy at the least happy incident; that genuine simplicity which filled worldly people with a feeling that they could not interpret to themselves; that rare and solid judgment of things; that keen discernment of characters; that horror for what is mean and base and selfish; that natural repugnance to what is vulgar; that gratitude for the smallest act of attention; and, in fine, that invincible courage, so marvellously visible at her supremely happy death. 'What! at home! too ill to go to Vespers!'

O God, I knew what those words implied. They instantaneously produced the first anticipation of the loss which two years later overthrew our hopes. Consumption, that seemed miraculously arrested in its course, then for a year quiescent, suddenly declared itself with violence only a month before her departure. Is there for some natures peculiarly delicate and angelical a secret intuition of the heaven that awaits them? Be the effects of that affinity, which here below connects them with it, what they may, her calm and profoundly conscious state with regard to the future, became now more than ever a thing to wonder at. Resigned to the Divine will, with a mind, as she herself quietly said, made up either to stay or go, wishing to stay for the sake of others, hoping to the last to have her wish in that respect granted; loving this life for the sake of the service that she knew she rendered to some dear to her, though to her of late its joys, so spiritual for her, had been mixed with both physical and mental suffering, saying to one who loved her, 'Don't be so anxious about me. It is the very way to lose me,' for she saw the action of Providence in everything, and its justice too; absorbed every morning for some space in God, though ever ready to welcome the chance visitor; she evinced to the last hour of her life the sweetest and noblest qualities, that bespeak natural delicacy, nobleness and honour. There was no fanaticism in her mind. It was a human and solid one. Nevertheless there were secrets not yet disclosed, with respect to her view of the world and its mutability; she had never liked it, or rather worldly people in it. Attached to her family, as the tenderest and most affectionate child, she would add no drop of bitterness to the cup of others, already as it seemed to her sufficiently replenished.[1]

[1] This means that she had for some years ardently desired to become a Benedictine novice, and so a nun, but had consented to defer it because her father who had already lost so much could not bear to lose her sweet company.

On the contrary, she devoted herself to household cares, accepting duties from which she might well have excused herself; and fulfilling them without the pleasures which make them sweet to mothers; but it was clear all the while that she looked to a religious life as to an asylum of peace, safe from the intrusion of all that was not elevated and congenial to her heart. God did not wish that her desires in this respect should be frustrated. Some days before her departure, having extorted the confession from her physician that there was no hope, she entered the order of St. Benedict, and, in virtue of a 'Bref ad hoc' of the Sovereign Pontiff, she made, secretly, between the hands of a superior of that Order, her profession and her great vows. But still, to the household, and to all who came to see her, nothing was to be visible but her sweet humanity, her tender affections, her resignation, and her patience. So, to her father leaving her room on one of the last days, she said, 'Come back soon, let me see you as long as I can.' To her confessor she said, 'I fear it is presumption in me, but somehow I am not afraid to die.' In truth, that was clear to those around her. Sacramentally visited, encompassed with divine protection and consolation, privileged even in regard to ecclesiastic discipline, for, being allowed to have Benediction in the house, she heard, the last evening of her life, even the music that she so much loved to play herself, the 'Adeste, fideles' and the 'Adoremus in aeternum' by Herman; passing away thus with Heaven about her, elevated, transfigured by faith and its holy instruments, charmed even by art and its inspirations of which she knew the source, she woke at four in the morning of the Holy Innocents, when calling on her brother to feel her poor hand, as she termed it. The moment seemed supreme. Again, and now for the last time, before re-joining him, visited by her divine Saviour in holy Communion, she expressed her wish to speak to each of those who were in the room. So then, with a 'distant softness' she made,

to use her expression, a few last requests. 'Don't speak much about me,' she said to one whose garrulity she distrusted, while 'Don't forget me, I fear you will soon forget me,' was what she uttered to another, to whom her whole life had been an inspiration. To the very last minute she was in possession of the fullest intellectual health. She continued kissing the cross and smiling at it. Then suddenly raising her large blue eyes to Heaven she passed away, the body falling back on the pillow, while you heard for a moment a faint rattle, like the spring of a watch that snaps and runs down. All was over, at six in the morning of the Holy Innocents, herself one of them, who might truly say, in the words of the office of that day, 'Anima nostra sicut passer erepta est de laqueo venantium; laqueus contritus est, et nos liberati sumus.'[1] Yes, even under the mere impressions of nature we say, 'delivered'; for she took away with her, so to speak, such an observing intelligence of all created things, combined with love for their Author, such an intense and human perception of what is sublime, and beautiful, and sweet, that you can no more imagine that she, possessing and exercising such faculties, has perished, than that the stars and the flowers and the harmony have perished, which, without such a creature, would be deprived of part, at least, of the very object and reason of their creation."

"O philosophe," said in a letter an old French priest who had in France been the tutor of Letitia and the other young Digbys, "qui niez ce qu'il y a de plus certain au monde; qui vantez les deux ou trois sages que le paganisme a produits, voyez donc la vie et les derniers moments d'une vierge Chrétienne, dans une maison du monde, mais dans une maison où la foi vit toujours, et dites nous qui de vos sages païens, qui de vos amis incrédules, a vécu et est mort en léguant au

[1] "Our soul is torn away as a bird from the net of the fowlers: the net is broken, and we are delivered."—*Psalms.*

monde de pareilles vertus; tant de résignation, tant d'héroïque courage."

With all the consolations which religion, and above all the Catholic religion, can give, no suffering exceeds that of a parent who sees a darling child dying, and this experience had thrice within the brief space of eight years, in addition to the loss of his wife, been that of Kenelm Digby. Perhaps it is all the harder for a man whose life and work has always been in his own house and family, and who has not the enforced attention and absence from home which the outside professions require. He looked back, in his now almost empty home, upon happy days in France, with his wife and young children around him, and recalled this loved Letitia "the earliest of the risers, out laughing before the dawn, and hurrying forth with her little sister before any one else in the house was awake, and for that reason the despair of aged priests who did not like to be forestalled at the divine altar; then returning full of praises at the beauty of the sky and the sweetness of the morning air, as if the sole object of such eccentric proceedings had been to admire and enjoy them."

"O tenderness of the ways of God!" Kenelm continues. "Our mothers taught us His name when we were children; the wife engraved it on the soul of the youth; the beloved daughter, when left to him, repeats it to the aged man, and communicates a last youthful and virginal revelation on her bed of death. Such are the transfigurations of the Christian woman."

"Impia jam pietas, animam lugere beatam,
Gaudentemque Deo flere, nocens amor est." [1]

[1] "It is an unpious piety to lament a blessed soul, and an ill love to weep for one who is rejoicing in God." These words of a mediaeval poet are on Letitia's tablet in St. John's Chapel at Ramsgate.

In Digby's volume of poems of 1866 there are some verses about his lost Letitia :

" I see her in the wondrous eye of mind,
Our joy, our pride, as if still one with us,
So tender, delicate, so gracious, kind,
Mysterious beauty compassing her thus.

Her large blue eyes, cast down upon me, smile
As once, on earth, when issuing from Mass,
When she would draw me upward to beguile
The sorrow deep in which she saw me pass.

Yes, in the downward look of those blue eyes
While somehow struggling upward to burst free,
There was a sign that pointed to the skies,
To warn, to cheer, to guide and comfort me."

And he could think of her as a small child, sitting, for instance, at the foot of a great tree in the forest of St. Germain :

" Methinks I see her seated there,
Her soft blue eyes, her flowing hair,
The gnarlèd roots, I see them still ;
No tears were then my eyes to fill.
Oh, yes ! it was a magic hour,
'Twas there began my children's bower."

IV

Mary Letitia also was buried under the Chapel of St. John Evangelist at the Church of St. Augustine's Abbey at Ramsgate. The Benedictine Abbey, founded from Subiaco, had been built between 1856 and 1859, and the Church previously built by Pugin, who had a house at Ramsgate, as a parish church at his own cost (and he is himself buried there) and opened for service in 1851, had been annexed to the Abbey.

" On the last line of cliffs (says Digby),

'Where Ocean mid his uproar wild
Speaks safety to his island child,'

on the grassy summit, where the chalk, emerging from the yellow clay for the last time, grows proudly ramparted, there stands a dark solemn pile, made up of church and tower, of cloistered cells and halls that announce themselves, as in the ancient style, monastical. Pass within the portal. There is at the north entry, and at the intersection of the two sides of an arched cloister, a chapel under the invocation of St. John, being a chantry over the bones of the dead. There is a monumental slab, and solemn imagery representing some who sleep below." [1]

Kenelm Digby's wife had built this chapel or chantry, on Pugin's design, and Digby himself had contributed to the cost of the cloister adjacent. Mrs. Digby, when she left her garden in Kensington at all, wished to go nowhere else than to Ramsgate.

"She loved the place where she had built this chapel, of which she so admired the beauty, from which she hoped that some spiritual good might flow to others, that it seemed as if her eyes could not be satiated with beholding it. 'How graceful it is,' she used to say, 'and how cheerful.' And yet, after all her pains and sacrifices to leave it as you see, and all her desires to hear Mass again over the remains of those she so dearly loved, she consented for the last summer, as it proved, that she was to pass in the world, not to visit it, but to remove elsewhere (Dover) for the sea-bathing, and this, in opposition to all her combined feelings of preference, and merely to comply with the desire of those who thought that, if she had come hither, she would have passed the whole of each day in the church, praying at her mother's grave." [2]

So, in another, and, for her, happier way, she was to come that summer to the Chapel of St. John, and Mass

[1] *Chapel of St. John*, p. 6.

[2] *Idem*, p. 244.

was to be said there when her senses could not hear or see. And now, in 1863, the vault was opened for the fifth time to receive the mortal part of Mary Letitia. Her brother Kenelm Thomas was also buried here when he died in 1893, a year after his sister Marcella.

The following description of the Chapel is taken from a little book about St. Augustine's Abbey, printed in the Monastery Press in 1906 :

" Immediately within the outer entrance door at the north corner of the West Cloister is

The Chapel of St. John the Evangelist.
The Digby Chantry.

" This Chapel, designed by Edward Welby Pugin, was erected in 1859 by the late Mr. Kenelm Digby, the talented author of the monumental work *Mores Catholici*, at the cost of over two thousand five hundred pounds, as a burial place for himself and the members of his family.

" It is altogether a work of art. An arcade of red marble pilasters in a double row standing upon elegantly carved bases and elaborately sculptured capitals set upon a low stone wall, the arcades enclosed by grilles of wrought-iron work, shuts it off from the North Cloister. Entrance is gained from the West Cloister through gates of wrought iron set in a carved stone doorway. In the tympanum of the doorway is an elaborate carving in alto relievo of the armorial bearings of the Digby family—a shield carrying a fleur de lys, surmounted with the crest of an ostrich holding in his mouth a horseshoe. Among the mantlings runs the label with the motto of the Digbys, ' Deo non fortunâ.'

" The walls on either side are pierced with large quatrefoil-shaped openings, through which views may be obtained of the interior, and Mass heard, by persons in the cloisters without. The oak-panelled roof is supported on grey marble pilasters with richly carved stone

capitals and bases, resting on brackets comprised of three-quarter-length figures of St. Benedict and his first disciples St. Maur and St. Placid, his nun sister St. Scholastica, St. Augustine, the Apostle of England, and St. Thomas of Canterbury, its most glorious martyr, each having its proper distinctive emblem.

"The roof is divided into compartments, containing over the altar painted representations of seraphim, the other panels carrying a diaper work of golden fleur de lys on a sky-blue ground. The floor is covered with elegantly designed tiles. The chapel is lighted by three windows on the South side, each of two lights containing figures of the name saints of the family. Chief and unique among them is the figure of the martyred boy king, St. Kenelm, the founder's namesake. The others include Our Blessed Lady with the Holy Child, St. Jane of Valois, St. Marcella, the friend of St. Jerome; St. John the Evangelist and St. Thomas the Apostle.

"The entire head of the arch above the cornice of the reredos of the altar forming the East wall is filled with stained glass set in heavy stone tracery. The subject is the Doom or Last Judgment. In the centre our Blessed Lord is depicted reigning as a king with orb, &c., throned upon a rainbow within a star-shaped compartment. This is surrounded by six trefoils showing the dead rising from their graves to receive reward or condemnation. To the first an angel offers a crown, to the latter is presented the flaming sword which drives them from the presence of the Great Judge. In the lowest compartment an angel is seen weighing souls against the Demon, while in the highest Abraham receiving into his bosom the spirits of the Just made perfect.

"The marble and gilded altar is supported on pillars of richly veined green marble with carved stone capitals and bases. Behind is a tomb of alabaster pierced with vesica-shaped apertures, enshrining the relics of the boy-martyr St. Benignus translated from the Cemetery

of St. Priscilla, 25th June, 1859. The altar in which is inserted relics of Sts. Florentina, and Arista, and other Martyrs was consecrated by Bishop Grant on the 22nd March, 1859. It is backed by a reredos of carved stone enriched with gilding, having as its central figure the Risen Christ bearing aloft His victorious banner in one hand and bestowing His benediction with the other. In the four side compartments He is accompanied by figures of adoring angels, St. Mary Magdalene with her pot of precious ointment, the other Maries, St. John and St. Peter with his keys. On the front of the altar gradine are cut these words in Gothic characters :

"'De profundis clamavi ad te Domine, Domine exaudi vocem meam.'

"Affixed to the South wall between the windows are two carved and gilded marble tablets with the following inscriptions. On one tablet is written :

"'Impia jam pietas animam lugere beatam; gaudentemque Deo flere, nocens amor est.'

"'Dulcissimæ ac cærisimæ Virgini, Mariæ Annæ Benignæ, ordinis Sti. Benedicti, MARIÆ ANNÆ LÆTITIÆ DIGBY, paterno nomine; quartæ e septem liberis immatura morte abreptæ; perenne luctus monumentum posuit pater infelicissimus; quæ cum innocentissime vixisset cum suis usque ad supremum diem, in SS. Innocentium Festo decessit anno salutis MDCCCLXIII. "Anima nostra sicut passer erepta est de laqueo venantium; laqueus contritus est et nos liberati sumus." *Jhesu Maria, Jhesu Maria, Jhesu Maria, vestra est; accipite filiolam meam!!*'

"On the second tablet is written :

"'Juxta in Christo requiescunt :
JOANNES GERALDUS DIGBY, qui decessit
MDCCCLVI, XXV Jun., annos natus VIII.
THOMAS EVERARDUS DIGBY, qui decessit
MDCCCLVI, XII Oct., annos natus XXI.
MARCELLA DILLON, horum avia, quæ decessit
MDCCCLX, II Jan., annos nata LXXII.
JOANNA MARIA DIGBY, mater, Marcellæ filia, quæ
decessit MDCCCLX, XVIII Jul., annos nata XLII.

" 'Hic superimposito requiescit pondere terræ,
Cara suis mater, cara marita viro,
Cara Deo, servisque Dei, quos illa fovebat,
Pauperibus: luctum pauperis urna tulit;
Non illi fatum diro languescere morbo,
Nec longâ vires imminuisse die:
Occidit, ut medium viâ jam transegerat ævum,
Rapta licet properâ morte, parata mori;
Pauperis optarat mortem; Deus aure benigna
Audiit ancillæ tam pia vota suæ:
Dives in obscuram periit delata tabernam
Languentesque oculos clausit egena manus.'

" There is also a memorial brass inscribed as follows:

" 'In pace Christi, hic quiescit KENELMUS THOMAS DIGBY, natus die XXIX Decembris MDCCCXLI, vita functus die XX Novembris MDCCCXCIII. Cujus animæ Deus misericors propitietur. Requiem Æternam dona ei Dñe et lux perpetua luceat ei.'"

Those who visit Ramsgate should also visit the Chapel of St. John, and breathe a prayer for the repose of these souls, and that the perpetual light may shine upon them.

CHAPTER X

LATEST WRITINGS

"QUONIAM eripuisti animam meam de morte, et pedes meos de lapsu, ut placeam coram Deo in lumine viventium."

Psalms.

I

AFTER Letitia's death in 1863, Kenelm Digby, now half-way between sixty and seventy, was left with one surviving son, Kenelm, and one daughter, Mary, living at home. No family group is more than a fair bubble floating a little way down the stream of time, and brief is the period of full flowering during which father and mother, brothers and sisters, are all there, and all together. In the Digby family this period had been the longer in that none of the children had left home for school, but the collapse, when it came, had been swift. Less than eight years before the death of Mary Anne Letitia, Kenelm Digby had been living so happily at Ramsgate with his wife and six fair children; what a contrast his life was now in the Kensington house, "rooms becoming deserted one after the other, observances hallowed and dear to memory rendered impossible for want of instigators and admirers, of agents and players." [1] "There is a change here," said a visitor friend when he came in.

[1] *Chapel of St. John*, p. 361.

" Efface ce séjour, ô Dieu, de ma paupière,
Ou rends le moi semblable à celui d'autrefois,
Quand la maison vibrait comme un grand cœur de pierre,
De tous ces cœurs joyeux qui battaient sous ses toits." [1]

Some passages in Digby's book of 1864, *Evenings on the Thames*, will find an echo in the hearts of those, like so many of us who are in the later part of life, and have tasted of the same bitter experience. He says that there are as many different kinds of sorrow as odours in the flowers of a garden.

" The grief for your little boy's death, however intense, is not the same as grief for your eldest son; grief for such a son is not the same as grief for a dear friend, however entwined within your heart; grief for a mother is not the same as grief for a wife—there's something quite new in that; grief for a wife is not the same as grief for a daughter, in whom your own life seemed blended inextricably; and that grief even, which appeared to reduce you to a state of utter exhaustion, or, if you will, of being quite full, and to overflowing, leaves space, nevertheless, within you for that different grief with which you feel yourself at last left in the world, in your own house, perhaps, with all your books, and pictures, and trinkets, and memorials of the bygone, quite by yourself, alone." Such, he adds, " have taken their degrees in grief, and, as far as regards suffering at least, may be said to have gone out in honours."

The " frozen conventionalism of modern life," as Digby says, stands in the way of forming new friendships which might console, nor can even the best friends help very much, and in vain will you direct such a sufferer to literature or poetry as a consolation.

[1] Lamartine, *La vigne et la maison*.

" His reply may be in the lines so instructive in more ways than one :

> ' Difficile est, quod, amice, mones ; quia carmina laeta
> Sunt opus, et pacem mentis habere volunt.' [1]

" No, more is required than all that ; therefore as the orator even says : ' pergamus ad ea solatia quae non modo sedatis molestiis jucunda, sed etiam haerentibus salutaria nobis esse possunt.' [2] These consolations may be referred to two sources, the hope of a future life, and the reconciliation to the thought of death as the passage to that other country of which we are all fellow-subjects." These thoughts, he says, " are at the bottom of much endurance, and of much silent, patient acquiescence in the state of things actually around us. People submit to a great deal that they would otherwise, however idly and fatally, perhaps, revolt against, for the reason that they think it is not to be perpetual."

This thought, or rather feeling, no doubt also subconsciously supports, in some degree, even those who do not accept Christian doctrine, because, as Spinoza says, ' We feel and know by experience that we are eternal,' " Sentimus experimurque nos aeternos esse," but it must be distinguished from the mere callous turning away of the mind and memory by those who are insensitive, or are preoccupied with the transient shows of this world. And, even for the sensitive, there is, as Digby says, something left behind by a great and critical sorrow which is often far worse than the sorrow itself has been.

[1] " That which you advise, my friend, is difficult, for joyful songs are a work, and require peace of mind."

[2] " Let us go to those consolations which are not only pleasing when troubles have been allayed, but even while they still are clinging, can be salutary to us." (Cicero.)

"It is a change in the inner man, which strands him on the shoal of the present; which warns him from dwelling on the past, and, enforcing the lesson of the vanity of human wishes, strikes from his reckoning, as far as this life is concerned, hopes in the future."

There is, he says, in the days immediately succeeding to a great loss, something of the heroic, which consoles, and then we still seem to feel on the stairs, in the rooms, in the garden, the close presence of the loved one, and so many visible traces still remain; but most of this gradually fades away, or becomes dim, by operation of time and the natural process of memory.

"When the hour of this weaning comes for us; when the influence of these memories begins to fail, and the heart grows hardened against their failing potency; it is then that your beloved ones are gone; it is then that you feel left quite alone; and that, let me tell you, is the grief of griefs; a sort of epoch of chaos, a sort of desolation within you for which there are no words, with no one, not even yourself, audibly to deplore it; or, we might say, that is the entire breaking up of the wreck, and the dispersion one by one of even the floating planks, and the final triumph of the sea and the tempest, when, as far as your perceptions are concerned, the last vestige of what you doted on is dissipated and lost, and nothing is left to gaze upon but the trackless ocean that represents the unknown and the eternal."

Lamartine has said, very beautifully, to the same effect:

"Le temps, ce ravisseur de toute joie humaine
Nous prend jusqu'à nos pleurs, tant Dieu nous veut sevrer;
Et nous perdons encore la douceur de pleurer
Tous ces chers trépassés que l'esprit nous ramène."

All, then, that remains, Digby continues, is "resignation, deep, religious, Christian resignation," the peace which comes of acquiescing in the general order decreed by the will of God, in the "vast system of grief" in which, as Lacordaire says, it is willed that men should here move. Resignation is the supreme test, or mode, of the love of God, "Who, in a manner inconceivable to us, is to restore all things. Quare tristis es, anima mea, et quare conturbas me ? demands the priest every morning at the commencement of the holy mass, to whom it is answered, Spera in Deo. Yes, the great God, the personal God, is the only true consoler for the miserable ; though the valid consolation emanating from him comes to us at times in a way that we neither foresee nor understand. . . . The spirit of resignation, then, on the whole, causes the particular will to be lost and dissolved into the general and higher Will ; causes the mind to love that Will as our end, as being itself most just, and right, and good, and imparts to the most impassioned an affection and loyalty to the Governor of the Universe, which will prevail over all private, indirect desires of our own, enabling them to acquaint themselves with God and be at peace."

"Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis, et in tribulatione meâ invocavi Dominum, et exaudivit vocem meam. Diligam te, Domine, fortitudo mea ; Dominus firmamentum meum, et refugium meum, et liberator meus." [1]

And yet, with all the consolations of religion, what pain to be without these loved ones, and to remember happy hours.

"Do what we will," says Digby, "do what we will, the departed, though it be only the 'puer Ascanius,' or

[1] "The lamentations of death have surrounded me, and in my trouble I have called upon the Lord, and he has heard my voice. I will love thee, Lord, my strength; Lord, my foundation, and my refuge, and my deliverer."

the playful girl, must accompany us on or off the Thames; it matters not; there is no denying them. Like the vision of the child in *Macbeth*, they can't be commanded. You thought, perhaps, at one time, that in the soul are no affections—that, as the poet says:

> 'We pour out our affections with our blood,
> And, with our blood's affections, fade our lives.'

Death's eloquence has now taught you better; and you believe that those whom you have lost take somehow an interest in you still. You thought them left upon the wind-swept cliff that beetles o'er the main, alone within the dark sepulchral chamber, or under the soft green sod; but no; they dwell within the luminous air; they enter the boat with us; they mount the garden steps with us; they sit by our side, or play near us as we gaze on the gliding river. They haunt our houses, too.

> 'We meet them at the doorway, on the stair,
> Along the passages they come and go,
> Impalpable impressions on the air,
> A sense of something moving to and fro.
> There are more guests at table than the hosts
> Invited; the illuminated hall
> Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,
> As silent as the pictures on the wall.' [1]

Yes, it is so with us, and, as the chorus in Euripides says, 'What greater suffering than this canst thou find for mortals, than to behold their children and their loved ones dead!'" [2]

Although the house of Kenelm Digby, by the end of 1863, was left so desolate, new youthful life came to cheer his later years. In 1865 his youngest daughter the last left to his home, Mary, married, very young,

[1] Longfellow.

[2] The above quotations are from *Evenings on the Thames.*

Hubert, a son of the old Catholic family of the Barons Dormer. In order that her father should not be left quite alone, it was arranged that, as Mr. Dormer was in a London Government office, the young couple should live with him at Shaftesbury House, and so they did until he died, fifteen years later. They soon had several children, and the house was refreshed by young faces and voices.

II

Something must now be said about Digby's later writings. After he had completed *Compitum* in 1854, a certain reaction took place in him as to the study of Christian antiquity and mediaeval history. He had always protested against those who too much exalted severe and serious studies and writings and pursuits, and turned their faces away from the simple pleasures and tastes and literature of the common folk. While he was living in the Isle of Thanet, with its summer London trippers and modest, cheerful tea-gardens and simple pleasure resorts, he wrote the book named *The Lovers' Seat*, published in the year so fatal to him, 1856. The alternative name of the book—he always gave an alternative name—was *Kathemerina, or Common Things in relation to Beauty, Virtue and Truth.* The scene introducing this book is laid not, as in the *Broadstone*, on the banks of a stream in Dauphiny, nor, as in the *Mores Catholici*, in a romantically situated monastery, nor as in *Compitum*, in a forest of the kings of France, but in a tea-garden on the suburban hills where now stands the Crystal Palace.

"From long solitary study," says the author, "from the elevated roads of honour and chivalry, from the

schools of history and philosophy, from the sacred limits where divinest truths are incidentally presented or elicited, our readers may repair, seeking rest and contentment and delight, to the lowly retreats where, like Antaeus when suffocated by the gripe of Hercules, by touching their mother Earth, they can renew their strength and recover what is the most precious of intellectual gifts, universality of mind and unlimited benevolence, by habits of conversation with the loving side of nature. And, perhaps, after all, the subject itself, independent of all reserves, is as elevated as any other. It may be allowable to observe that the beauty of the earth, the common things and common persons of the world, are called upon by the high voices that we have heard in churches to praise our Creator; it is not only the angels that are so exhorted; it is the waters, the sun, moon and stars, the shower and the dew, and heat and cold, the hoary frosts, the ice and snow, the nights and days, the light and darkness, the lightning and clouds, the earth, the mountains and hills, all the things that spring up in the earth, the fountains, seas and rivers, the fowls of the air, the beasts and cattle, the sons of men, young men and maidens, the old with the younger, and all people, or in other words, all the common visible things around us, which, if they were not worthy of being much thought about, would hardly have been called on to fulfil such a pure and exalted ministry."

Such is the theme of this very miscellaneous book. Certainly it is good to remind religious people sometimes of this wide scope of religion, which they may be apt to forget in the temples, though saints like Augustine and Cyprian, Francis of Assisi and Francis of Sales, never did forget it.

The *Lovers' Seat*, although, like all Digby's books, no "popular success," was in accordance with the mood

of the 'fifties. General benevolence and cheerfulness was in the air. Dickens was writing still, and his books had given a true and charming picture of all this side of life. Dickens, says Digby, not only sees, but forces us to see, goodness in very minute things. Another writer, less known now, Mayhew, collected in his book called *London* a vast and admirable store of humble conversations from the streets and markets. It is the best book of its kind ever written. He is often quoted by Digby to show the artless and truly human goodness of the Many.

In the *Lovers' Seat* Kenelm Digby protests against all kinds of excessive dogmatism, fanaticism, intolerance or contempt of others, and intellectual or religious arrogance. On the whole he thinks, unlike Milton, that it is better to toy harmlessly (*bien entendu*) with charming Amaryllis in the shade, or with the tangles of Næera's hair, in a tea-garden, or a boat, or on a river-bank, or on a bench by a suburban wood, than to exhaust mind and body in the pursuit of fame, or exact and precise metaphysical truth, closing eyes and heart to the beauties of this earth and human nature.

The *Lovers' Seat* contains a passage[1] which may be quoted here because it is of an interesting autobiographical kind. Digby has been urging that disputes between Catholics and non-Catholics ought not to be waged with asperity, and that the former, at least, should express themselves in more tolerant and considerate language than they always do. But, he says,

"I hear it asked by others, Who are these persons to admonish each other thus? Do these counsels come from one who has elsewhere written hastily, harshly,

[1] Vol. ii. p. 345.

unfairly, with the very thoughts, words and, we suspect, looks of intolerance? Well, is there no place for a palinode, supposing even that it were so, as is possible. For

> 'In what we love faults oft take gloomiest hue,
> And thus, my countrymen, I warred on you.'

And yet, if an advocate so accused were allowed to make a personal allusion, he would say, perhaps truly, that the mischief at the worst was only skin-deep; for if any one had then [*i.e.* at date of *Mores Catholici*, etc.] turned towards him, moved by the gravity of words borrowed from others and of examples cited from others, and had said, I must yield myself up; I am persuaded; I cannot resist this eloquence, this logic, this extraneous force, wielded by the genius and experience of so many others, he [Digby] might now tell us that he would have stopped him; that he would have said to him, If you are only inflamed by the words of another, persuaded, enticed, or forced or driven by the eloquence of these passages, by the fears that they produce, by the hopes that they kindle, by the views that I take, by the feelings that I experience—resist them, turn from them. Think not to build up with the same instruments with which formerly it was overthrown [viz. human agencies] that which once stood upright. Be true to yourself, leave others and forget them. But if you are thus moved because you find in your own heart a spontaneous voice, an accordant echo, because you know that by so yielding you are leaving extraordinary for common thoughts; vanity and inconstancy, tempestuous emotions and libidinous opinions, for common, certain, and defined law; because you are moved by the antiquity and constancy of examples, by the authority of letters and monuments; because you know that by so yielding you are about to embrace a union favourable to all the sweets of life and to the exercise of all the endearing and precious offices of humanity; that you are yielding, not to this man or

that, but to a greater love of divine and human things, convinced that these views will cause you to love yourself less, God and men more; that you will love, if possible, your country, and all its venerable institutions with more loyalty, your friends with more affection, your enemies with more truth, your contemporaries with more sincerity, the dead with more reverence, that you will have a wider, broader ground on which to develope all the sympathies of your nature; that you will be able better to embrace in your love all ages, nations, and all mankind; then see whether you owe this change to the bigotry of another that would destroy all the springs of your own action, whether it is not to yourself rather that you yield, whether the result is due, not to another's intolerance, but to your own freedom."

This would be a good line of self-examination for one who meditated uniting himself to the ancient Catholic Church of Christendom, or even for one who had long so united himself—to test the results of his action.

The *Lovers' Seat* is full of quotations, like all Digby's works, and even now the great and wise, especially Augustine, have their part, but more of the quotations are from lighter literature, such as the writings of Charles Lamb and Hood and Hazlitt, and innocent popular sentimental verse of the nineteenth century. It is a book, one would say, that a wounded soldier, home from the wars, would like to have by his bed of convalescence. Or it is a good book to take in one's pocket for a summer day of lounging in woods, or on the river. Like Digby's other later books, it did not attract much notice, and it was blamed by some religious critics of the strict and severe order, who may have deemed it aimed against their own rather gloomy predilections. Digby was grateful to his

friend the Count de Montalembert, as one of the few who praised the book, and blamed its blamers.

> "Mere gratitude alone makes him desire
> To tell of friendship that would e'en admire
> His *Lovers' Seat*. Montalembert did blame
> Those who condemned it. I need no one name.
> The praise he gave it I dare not repeat;
> From such a pen the words must have been sweet:
> But thus much can be sung, when at the end
> He styled himself a true devoted friend,
> 'For ever grateful,' too, he chose to add
> For the same pages others said were bad.
> But what's the blame of critics, when we know
> That he was pleased with what they counted low?
> Montalembert will outweigh all their store,
> When he approves what mortal can ask more?" [1]

Montalembert wrote, in English, from the Athenæum Club, 22nd May, 1858, to Digby:

"My dear Friend,

"I have been detained here some days longer than I expected on account of the Duchess of Orleans' death, and during my melancholy excursion to Richmond and Claremont. On that occasion your delightful *Lovers' Seat* has been my constant companion. I have not yet read more than the best part of the first volume, but I am quite charmed with your talent and your style. Your loving and generous soul has never shone out to greater advantage. Who can be the narrow-minded, bad-hearted people who have abused those exquisite volumes? I wish I knew them, and could abuse them as they deserve. They must be some of Veuillot's satellites in English clothes. All I can say is that I agree with every word of what you have written. I intend to read the rest on my way to Paris, but cannot refrain from thanking you *dès à présent* for the extreme

[1] *Temple of Memory*, Canto VI.

gratification and edification you have afforded me. Believe me, your obliged and devoted friend,

"C. MONTALEMBERT."

Digby's wife rather regretted his deviation from his severer studies of old. "Where are those fine old books you used to read?" she said to him. "I like to see their very outsides." "Oh, you must and will," she said to him a few days before her death, "before this summer ends, write something that may do good." But some books can only be written at one time of life; others at other times, because man himself is never exactly the same two years together. No man, said the Greek sage, "dips his foot twice in the same river."

III

Some passages have already been quoted from Digby's next two books, the *Children's Bower*, published in 1858, after the death of his two sons, and the *Chapel of St. John*, published in 1861 after that of his wife. After the events of 1856 the light-heartedness of the *Lovers' Seat* was not to be looked for. Digby at the beginning of the *Children's Bower* speaks of himself, in his usual way, as if he were speaking of another unnamed person, as "prostrated by irresistible calamity coming upon him in an unexpected form, the death of those he loved."[1]

But, he says, "however stunned, disheartened, struck to the quick, such a person has something more to do than to feel. He will still move and work mechanically, as muscles after life has left them. He cannot remain long at rest, crossing his hands before him, and wholly abandoning the pursuits which had hitherto deluded

[1] *Chapel of St. John*, p. 179.

him with the idea of his being not wholly a dead weight upon the earth. The often repeated saying, 'It was so easy for the author not to have written it' does not apply in every instance. It is not so easy always *not* to write, especially when the imagination and the heart have been struck, to say nothing of something else having been deeply and powerfully moved. Therefore in spite of all discouragement, finding no other advantage in the process but only the losing of hope by time, without the prospect of any pleasure resulting to himself, he returns to his former habits, and proposes to offer some sketch that, while in harmony with his own condition, may possibly, however little his pretensions, prove not wholly uninstructive or unsuggestive to others."

The subject of the *Children's Bower* was that then nearest to his own heart, childhood and early youth, its innocence, cheerfulness, simplicity, unaffectedness, naturalness—all the virtues which made Christ set a little child in the midst of his disciples—interwoven with lovely memories of his own two lost boys. Like all Digby's books, the *Children's Bower* is not exactly a work of art, but a garland of beautiful things gathered by the way, and, like all his books, its discursive character makes it impossible to describe. Those many who have loved and lost a darling child, or a youth on the brink of manhood, just now so vast a legion, would find it of some consolation to read this book.

"A child, like little John, stay of our steps in this life, and guide to all our blessed hopes hereafter, absolutely calls on us to see and hear what is divine. He seems to have a mission 'illuminare illos qui in tenebris et in umbrâ sedent,' so that one may apply to him the words of St. Augustin, 'Corruscasti et splenduisti, et rupisti surditatem meam.'" [1]

[1] "Thou hast shone forth with splendour, and broken my deafness."

At the close of the *Children's Bower*, Digby speaks of his general aim in the book ; a lofty aim it is :

"I have wished to arrange, as it were, a vast and an imposing procession ; I have sought to call forth, as assistants at the funerals of this child and this youth, some, at least, of their ancestors and, as one might say, living relatives, that is, representatives who resembled them in their character, persons collected from the human race, taken from the one family of the innocent, the heroic, and the religious, the vast brotherhood of nature and grace, of blood and of spirit. I have not shrunk from inviting even those who in antiquity seem to have aspired at what they of Christian times alone could realize. Hence have passed as it were before us Plato and St. Augustin, Pindar and David. To assist at it I have called some from the dead and others from the living. There have been fellow-countrymen, and those who from foreign nations have passed the seas obedient to our call. Contingents there were from the court of the great monarch who heard Bossuet, and from the schools of the religious who knew One only that is great. Deputations there have been from the nobility of the world, ushered by ducal and princely authors. Things splendid and illustrious from every sphere have had their place in it, from the pomps of nature to the chosen of human grandeur, from an order of thoughts all contemplative and spiritual, to the ephemeral joys of our early dreams. And if the idea has not been realized, if the execution has proved only the feebleness and disorder of the mind that was entrusted with the conduct of this great and, I may add, pious solemnity, at least let the immensity of its pains, conveying an idea of the worth that prompted them, of the beauty of the examples that they were intended to transmit, of the love that they sought to manifest, claim indulgence, and bespeak pity."

And his aim was "to bestow such honours on the

beloved dead as might prove not merely gratifying to the heart of those who lamented them, but salutary and efficient in the highest sense—a service to the dead by conferring benefit on the living."

Perhaps no books do more practical good than those unassuming ones which show by example what a family life can be—the happiness of so many family groups is ruined by the want of an ideal, and by the absence of sweet manners. The Catholic religion, at its best, is the great mistress of courtesy, charity, forbearance, and good manners.

A reviewer, in the *Tablet*, of the *Children's Bower*, said that the appearance of a "work by Kenelm Digby is of more importance to Catholics than a change in the Ministry," and went on to make some very true observations on his writings in general, which it is well to quote here. The writer said :

"Others may exhort, teach and argue—others may establish political maxims, dispel historic doubts, refute polemical calumnies; some may undertake to defend us against hostile attacks, others to open our eyes to our own shortcomings; logic, sarcasm and invective may be employed to convince, to sting, and to coerce us,—all may do their parts well, but we do not believe that they will do as much for us as one book from Kenelm Henry Digby.

"We take the special value of his writings to consist in this, that, whereas others take us as we are, and leave us as they found us, supplying us only with facts, arguments or inducements of which we may, or may not avail ourselves, the author of the *Ages of Faith* goes to work in a wholly different way. He acts on the individual reader himself, moulding, swaying, and transforming him by an unconscious process. He exalts the mind, ennobles the feelings, he purifies the hearts

of his readers. He appeals to nothing that, as Catholics, they do not know to be good and true; he describes nothing that they do not feel to be beautiful and holy; he presents them with a standard of excellence as the natural measure of their thoughts, acts, and feelings, which it requires a deliberate exercise of their will to repudiate in favour of something lower and more debased. He exercises a most gentle, but powerfully constraining influence on his readers by setting before them what they recognize instinctively as true types of Catholicity, and leaves them to appropriate them. One of the great praises of the monastic institute, in addition to its effects on those who embrace the religious state, is justly said to be that, even for those who do not embrace it, it preserves the ideal standard of virtue, in their minds, and prevents them from lowering it to the level of their own practice."

Digby's next book was called *The Chapel of St. John, or, a Life of Faith in the Nineteenth Century.* It was written after his wife's death, and published in 1861, and her character is its central theme. As he says in it:

"It is true that we still are presented each year with biographical notices of persons in one way or another remarkable; of some of whom the words are deemed oracles for mankind, whose science is known to all countries, and whose discoveries are destined to sound through all ages, but, however interesting such records may be in a general manner according to the ideas of the day, it is well, and, even in the interest of the world itself, it is important, to keep up the ancient custom also of leaving to posterity a memory of persons living in the midst of it, practising what a noble French writer lately calls the monotonous life of the Gospel, lest persons like ourselves should begin to suppose that what used to be called a life of faith, with the manners consequent upon it, ought to be regarded as merely an ancient theory, or, at the most,

as a vestige of the past ; for, in fact, such a life spent and practised in the world, has for the last two hundred years been so seldom a theme in England for literary composition, that we might truly say in the style of Tacitus, that within such domains we should have lost the memory of it, if it had been as much in our power to forget as to be silent."

The *Children's Bower* and the *Chapel of St. John* are books of the kind that Ste. Beuve had in mind when he wrote these words :

" However agitated may be the times we live in, however withered or corrupt you may imagine them, there are always certain books, exquisite and rare, merely in consequence of the materials of which they are composed, which manage to appear. There are always hearts to produce them in the shade, and other hearts to gather them. They are books which are not like books, and sometimes even are really not books. They are simple and discreet destinies thrown upon cross-roads off the great dusty highway of life, and which, when you are wandering yourself off it, when you come up to them, arrest you by their sweet odours, and purely natural flowers, of which you thought the race extinct. The form of these books varies, sometimes it is a collection of letters from the drawer of a person lately dead ; sometimes it is a surviving lover, who consecrates himself to a faithful remembrance, seeking to transmit and perpetuate it. So, under an exterior more or less veiled, he gives to his reader a true history. There are examples of other forms among those productions of hearts, and the form is a thing indifferent, provided there is still a simple, naked record of the circumstances experienced, with as little view as possible to the creation of a novel ; for those sort of treasures should never be turned into romance, according to the notions of those times when the Astrée was in vogue, with all their fancies about

idealization, and ennobling, and giving the quintessence of real things."

The *Récit d'une Sœur*, by Pauline de Ferronays, is, perhaps, the best-known instance of books of this kind, which are all too rare.

Near the close of this very beautiful *Chapel of St. John*, Kenelm Digby makes a veiled but unmistakeable confession that he had not always, in temper and kindness, been worthy of so much love and sweetness, and care for him, and unselfishness and goodness. It is, alas, a confession which most men have to make, at least to themselves, when they look back on married life from a time when it is too late to make amends, except by contrition, to the loved and lost.

IV

After the *Chapel of St. John*, Digby wrote his last book in prose, called *Evenings on the Thames, or, Serene Hours and what they require*, which was published in two volumes in 1864. During his earlier years at Kensington he was fond of organizing rowing parties on the lower Thames, having tea at such homely places as the "Sun" gardens at Kingston, or the tea-gardens at Kew and Hampton Court, or the "Bells of Ouseley," at Old Windsor, near Runnymeade, well-known to Etonians. He calls it the "never-to-be-forgotten hostel of the Five Bells" . . . "an old haunted-looking house, that stands solitary with some gloomy elm-trees in front, at a turn of the river, skirting majestic woods." Or his crew might row past the Eton meadows to Surley Hall, or even to Monkey Island. The calm wide reaches by Richmond and Twickenham, or in the level country by

Weybridge and Chertsey, where the Thames seems to be resting from its travels, pleased him too. He loved to let the boat lie amid the tall rushes at the end of some swan-haunted eyot, and even now swam the river sometimes, resuming the favourite exercise of his youth.

In this book are many delightful word-pictures of the Thames, the ideal boating river, calm, serene, and well-controlled, of which the poet Gray so truly remarked, "Rivers which have lived in London and its neighbourhood all their days, will not run roaring and tumbling about. No; they only glide and whisper." Digby must have loved, if he knew it, *Ionica* by William Johnson, with the delicious Eton Boating Song and other verse breathing the very spirit of the River. The Thames seems to glide and whisper through Digby's two volumes, bearing on its calm and gentle stream, like so many light craft or swans, a multitude of charming thoughts and quotations. For pleasure in a boat serenity in the company is above all things necessary, especially on so tranquil a river, and this gives the theme. What is it, in thought, and way of life, and religion, that most tends to make men and women serene? Whom would one choose for companions on a June evening on the Thames? Would one, for instance, choose an ardent Radical Reformer, a rigid Puritan, an assertor of Woman's Wrongs, a hot argumentative controversialist in any cause, a restless financier, a man to whom "time is money," a pompous plutocrat, a woman of the nothing-but-fashionable world, or one who delights in no conversation which is not maliciously critical? Or would one prefer those for river company who are bred in the school of respect for authority and reverence for the things of old, the young and simply gay, or perhaps

rather silent and dreamy, sometimes, maybe, a quiet old priest, who at intervals, as Digby says, will read his breviary while others are bathing, or wandering a little from the bank ?

The boat often passed by Petersham, where Kenelm in his boyhood first made the acquaintance of the serene river—how much, by the way, he would have enjoyed Eton as a " wet-bob "—

" Petersham—who that only navigates on the river knows much about it, hid away as it is among the woods ? And yet, when you have landed, and turned down yon lane where the tall elms are casting their shade over it, you will soon find in that village a place very friendly and favourable as regards the purpose we always have in view. What majestic avenues, all leading to the great house that gives to Ham so historical a character, recalling Thomson and Armstrong, and the good Duke and Duchess of Queensbury, Prior's Kitty, who nursed their friend Gay there when he was ill. Then what sweet meadows down to the river ! and those sloping lawns which front it on the opposite shore, how beautiful are they ! I know a bank on that side where you can pass, with those who like it, a very serene hour. It is fragrant with the hawthorn that blooms behind it." [1]

A nephew of Kenelm, still living, Mr. John Digby, recollects taking an oar in some of these expeditions. Digby wrote the *Evenings on the Thames* during the period of comparative cheerfulness between the time when there was hope that his daughter Letitia would recover and the final development of her malady which rapidly ended in her death at the end of 1863, though he did not finish it till after that woe. Its pages, he says, in the preface,

[1] *Evenings on the Thames*, vol. ii. p. 310.

" remind him of the wild, exuberant joy occasioned by what he and others thought was an escape, though it proved to be only, according to their views, a respite ; they constituted his employment amidst the felicity so short to him of a season which was to prove for her a last summer. That is why they are now printed after an overthrow of hopes, otherwise calculated to ensure their suppression and his silence for ever."

The book is, accordingly, although with interludes of deepest melancholy, of cheerful tone, on the whole, much in the same vein as the *Lovers' Seat*. It extols pleasures that are simple, natural and popular, the benefits to be derived from a recklessly indolent holiday when days are fine—all this embellished by delightful quotations from authors of all ages who wrote in this vein. Digby was still, and to the close of his life, in the mood of protesting against excessive intellectualism and too exalted or serious ideals of the expenditure of time ; and, indeed, those who firmly believe in life eternal, ought not to place too much value on transient time, and thus true Christianity should have a sanction for, among other things, that innocent dissipation upon which Mr. Worldly Wiseman looks with a severe countenance, thinking how the time thus wasted might be spent in improving one's education, or advancing the " Progress " of the race. There is a good deal to be said for mortifying in oneself the passion for useful, incessant activity, which is often disastrous to the spiritual being and to peace of the soul. Digby's books are a noble medicine for those with whom energetic and conscientious action has almost become a painful malady, and may be undoubtingly recommended to such patients, who are said by travellers to abound especially in the United

States of America. Without always sitting in the sun like Neapolitan *lazzaroni*, an occupation never likely to become possible or popular in a northern climate, a sacrifice may often, with much advantage, be made to that bright deity of hours which would otherwise be spent in making money, or harassing our fellow beings with schemes for their improvement. There are not nearly enough bank holidays in the English year, there should be one at least once a month from April to October; and in this respect we are much worse off than our mediaeval ancestors with their numerous feasts of the Church, and shall probably run faster down the hill into nervous decline and break-down. A kind of superstitious adoration has grown up in England and America of what poor Charles Lamb calls "that fiend Occupation, that my spirit hath broken," and perhaps the asceticism, or self-deprivation of innocent pleasure, which once found its scope in the life more specifically devoted to religion, has now gone into business, including the "sport" which before the Great War had become so serious and business-like.

The *Evenings on the Thames* is delightful for the meditative, full of mellow wisdom, and contains many thoughts that are salutary and reconciling about religion. This forgotten book can be recommended to those who are so fortunate as to be able to pursue wisdom with some degree of leisure.

V

After the *Evenings on the Thames*, Digby published no more prose, and employed the last fifteen years of his life in writing verse, thus reversing the usual procedure

of youth and age. His first metrical volume was published in 1865, under the title of *Short Poems*, and an enlarged edition appeared in 1866. In these poems there is much autobiography. In that called "The Despondent Cured," he describes a certain morbid state in which he himself had lived for some years (no doubt since the flight of Marcella), and from which he had lately emerged. The symptoms had been dark melancholy, cherished anger and irritation, vexation that others did not show more clearly love for him, critical and suspicious thoughts, egotistic desires to engross more of the time and company of the young, gloomy forebodings of more disasters.

"Well, here again the cause of his displeasure
Was his own love of this life without measure.
The fault was not in things that touched his pride
But in the selfish love with which were dyed
His erring thoughts, so anxiously diffused;
To reap at once what here has been refused
By Heaven's own goodness, wishing to impart
A bliss more worthy of the human heart
Than ever could be found in this poor vale,
Where tears must flow, and richest blessings fail.
The culprit here again stood self-confessed,
And thus once more his spirit found its rest.
Oh! happy moment, truly wondrous cure,
That might through endless ages still endure;
The fault acknowledged, felt to be his own;
No blame on circumstance, or others thrown,
And the result a calm, contented soul,
Pleased with each part, and ravished with the whole."[1]

Another poem called "The Remedy for Human Sadness" is on the same theme, and contains a fine passage upon the mortality of books, once living and admired, and the vanity of literary ambitions. In old

[1] *Short Poems*, p. 101.

age, too, he says, "historic lore" and "letters" begin to weary. They have lost their freshness for minds that have become "permanently tired." Nothing endures to the end but religion. As Manzoni, the Italian, said, when a friend reproached him for not writing more novels, "We must all come to theology at last."

Here, too, from the same volume, are reminiscences of the loveliest period of his family life :

"A fund of new, delightful themes,
To gild and charm a poet's dreams.
What strolls through Tunbridge rocks and slopes,
When every morning brought new hopes !
What boating in fair Pegwell Bay !
What songs, what tricks, each night and day !

And then to think of graver things
All fled as if with swallow wings !
The sense, the skill, the constant prayer,
For piety with grace was there.
The tutor learnèd, ever kind,
The chaplain with his holy mind.

The house so full, so well ordained,
Where all was peace, and none complained ;
The altar and observance bright,
That daily graced the morning light,
The friends, the mirth, the evening songs,
And what to sweetest home belongs.

Ah well !—'tis bootless now to sigh ;
For we, and all once ours, must die.
All must still change and pass away,
To grow up, fall, or else decay,
Rejoining things already past,
Followed by what no more will last."

I had meant to end my quotation here, but some verses which follow are, to me, so affecting, that I must ask the reader to let me quote them also. Digby's books

are not at all easy to obtain, and this is my excuse for long quotations.

"Let fates of monarchies be known,
Their grandeur we, too, freely own;
Let Memory's dim, mysterious hall
Present their rise, and growth, and fall;
But let there be a chamber too
For what more moves both me and you.

In which is kept for tender hearts
That which a deathless peace imparts,
The thought of those no longer here,
Whose image fadeth year by year,
Once like a part of your own being,
And now each day still further fleeing;

And leaving only for your stay
Just that which cannot pass away,
The shadows in your mental eye
Of those you know can never die,
Whose lives, though short, were rightly spent,
Who, leaving earth, to Heaven went.

There, in that vague and silent store
Where nought distinct is figured more,
Midst years and chances all rolled by,
Midst thoughts of mirth that yield a sigh,
You find a help, a hope, a power
To guard you in your final hour.

For what will seem this mortal span
So little consonant with man,
Its hopes, its evils, or its end,
When elsewhere Heaven may intend
To finish for you that which seems,
And grant realities for dreams?

That life which nothing more can sever,
From those you love, to last for ever,
That guiltless state in heaven blest,
Where ransom yields the joyful rest,
Where the forgiven, happy, free,
Reap bliss and immortality."

After another smaller volume of verse in 1867, entitled *A Day on the Muses' Hill*, Digby published in 1869 that

called *Little Low Bushes.* This contains, among other pieces, the poem on Sauston Hall, near Cambridge, already mentioned, and a charming narrative of a little tour in the Loire country, ending with a visit to his friends the d'Esgrignys, in the Vendean land. Then he wrote an alarmingly long poem of twenty cantos, and 550 pages, published by Longmans in 1872, entitled *Ouranogaia, or Heaven on Earth.*

In this, as in all his later volumes, he assails those who, as he thought, like the Port Royal school in France or the English Puritans, divide too absolutely the sphere of religion from that of the general life of the world. He held that Heaven was present in all the good and innocent joys of earth, which were raised to a higher level by this divine influence. His design, he says in the Preface, is to

" represent the happiness, comparable in some degree to what reigns in Heaven, which results from taking a cheerful, sympathetic, tolerant, and Catholic view of human life, as being on the confines of our celestial country, with constant means of access to it. . . . The object is also to suggest that human pleasures in this world, even those which are deemed most strictly confined to earth, and to our two-fold formation in the present state of existence, are enhanced immeasurably when associated in a general way with such higher thoughts as may be said, without extravagance, to culminate in Heaven, being tempered and coloured, as it were, by an all-pervading tone of trust in that forgiveness which constitutes an article of the Christian Creed.

" The whole is so arranged as to show in detail that some of the bliss of Heaven, as far as we can conceive it, may be enjoyed by mankind in this life by means of the spectacle of Creation, and in particular of Beauty, as also Mirth, Admiration, Friendship, Love, Goodness,

Peace, Poetry, Learning, Philosophy, and Festivals of the Church, as developing, even by the rites attending them, those internal dispositions which render man what a theologian calls 'animal carissimum Deo,' and, in fine, through sanctity, untroubled and unaffected by human follies, while ignoring rather than trying to extirpate the inevitable. There is an attempt to show likewise with what effect Heaven may be said to descend especially on youth and age, and on those who have gone astray. . . . Poverty and a low social rank are shown to present no obstacle to this vision of two worlds; and, lastly, Heaven is represented as brought down to the sick and to the dying."

It was, in fact, a metrical essay upon the same theme as inspired his *Compitum*. The line of division of temperament which in the days of Greece and Rome made some thinkers Stoics and others Epicureans, also runs through the history of the Christian Religion. On one side of the line are the Puritans, and men like the author of the *Imitation*, and the weighty and sad St. Cyran, Pascal, and others of the Port Royal school. To these the thought of God, union with God and separation by sin from God, is so overwhelming, that they incline to abstract that idea from all the joys and beauties of this life, and to look upon these rather in the light of temptations. Perhaps the most extreme exposition of this view is given by old Isaac Watts in his naïve verses:

"Nature has soft but powerful bands,
Our reason she controls,
And children with their little hands
Cling closest to our souls.

Thoughtless they play the old Serpent's part,
What tempting things they be!
They wind themselves about our heart,
And keep it far from Thee."

On the other side of the line are men like Francisco di Assisi and François de Sales, who see God in all that is innocent and beautiful in life and nature. The *summum bonum*, the *beata vita*, lies for them, also, in love of, and union with, God, but to them God shines through all the Universe. They are not ascetics, although they find the greatest joys in the simplest and least artificial pleasures, and fly from wearisome pomps and corrupting vanities. Digby was upon this side of the line ; he was, if one may use the expression, a Christian Epicurean, not a Christian Stoic. Nothing could have been more remote from his way of thinking than those lines of Isaac Watts. To him all pleasures were good, and of divine nature and origin, when they were pure. Those who broke away from the Catholic Church had done, he thought, their utmost to divorce religion from the natural joys of life, and had even, to some degree, infected with this false view the Catholic Church itself.

After *Ouranogaia*, published in 1872, came another book of verse called *Last Year's Falling Leaves*, published in 1873, and including some poems out of a shorter book called *Hours with the First Falling Leaves*, which was printed in 1872. In the Preface he says :

"The general object of these Poems is to show in conjunction the greatest and the smallest things of life, the highest and the lowest, the greatest and the least formally wise, the spiritual and the corporeal, reason and affection, faith and nature. Perhaps the bare mention of such a design, with many of the terms employed to express it, may, for some minds, afford sufficient proof that the author who entertains it, and uses such words, is incapable of thought. Of course, if they choose, they are free to conclude that whoever

thinks differently from them cannot think at all. But be that as it may, such was his object."

One of these poems in *Last Year's Leaves*, called "Luzencay," describes life in the Breton château of his dear friends the d'Esgrignys :

> "Oh ! manners of old noble times
> As musical as distant chimes ;
> Oh ! gift of Heaven's benignity,
> When their last traces we can see.
> I care not if my verse offends
> In saying that these grace my friends,
> D'Esgrigny's cheerful, happy pair,
> Who wearied, wounded hearts repair,
> Gentle and gracious, constant, true,
> Who make life wholesome thus for you."

In another poem he gives a most excellent account of Inns in various lands and ages, with stories old and new connected with them, not forgetting his humble but dear "Sun" at Kingston, "Swan" at Thames Ditton, "Bells of Ouseley," and the "Spaniards" of Hampstead. In the prelude he expresses his hope for a few kindred souls to read his poems, even one, not a hurried, flurried, excitement-hunting reader, but

> "one with leisure, thoughtful made,
> Who can enjoy both sun and shade,
> With that fine, exquisite, deep sense
> Of things for which hard minds are dense,
> Who has his fancies for retreat,
> His favourite, accustomed seat,
> Whom old familiar corners please,
> As one who loves pure Nature's ease,
> Thus I would have my audience free
> From worshipping Publicity ;
> One who can trust himself to judge,
> Not always after others trudge ;
> In heart who condescends to herd
> With one of whom he never heard,

Provided he is found to say
Things that will suit our common clay,
Our common heart, our common soul,
And never boast to know the whole."

Alas ! is not the scanty band of the serene still further diminished since Digby wrote, and with good reason, too ? No wonder that the circulation of his books was small, if he wrote for a Public so limited in the busy Victorian England.

One long poem in *Last Year's Leaves* is in praise of London and its suburbs, its various pleasures, and the good manners of those, especially the poor and simple, who dwell therein. Kenelm Digby had come to love London more and more. His joy in the country had been connected with journeys on foot and horseback, swimming, and climbing, pursuits unfit for a man now past seventy. He had always disliked the rural sports which take the form of depriving fellow creatures of the joy of life. In this poem he says :

" I hate to hear the shot
Echoed by men who stray to hunt and kill,
Or shouts resounding still
Of those whose temper, stern, unyielding, hot,
Will burst to awe their dogs."

He might still row a little, or at any rate sit in a boat, and there is certainly no river on earth for rowing like the Thames. I will quote the last three stanzas of another long poem in this volume, called " Faith with Nature," because I love them and their theme, the Litany of Our Lady.

" Loretto's song is sweet,
To utter love most meet ;
The words, though drawn from Scripture's deepest lore,
Seem but like children's play,

Gathering flowers in May,
Each fairer still than what was culled before ;
When cries of artless joy so bland
Denote that more is there than they can understand.

Than this no sweeter flower
E'er grew in earthly bower,
And, if the heart must rise to heaven above,
Its grace descends to greet
These offerings so meet,
The beams of pure although a human love ;
Lost in effulgence of that fire
Which Faith bestows on men all goodness to acquire.

'Tis music of the sky
When thus we sing and cry,
It is to bask in smiles all joy above,
To float through domes of air,
To leave the earth and dare
Enjoy the waves of deepest rest and love,
The breath of that eternal day,
Where Joy, and morning air, and Love for ever stay."

Another long piece in the unambitiously charming volume of light and careless verse called *Last Year's Falling Leaves* is a philosophic poem on "The Supernatural," a sphere which Digby would never separate from the Natural, through which it shines, he believed, with real and heavenly rays.

In about his seventy-eighth year, in 1875, rather a feat for that age, Digby published *The Temple of Memory*, a poem in twelve cantos covering 426 pages. The motto is drawn from St. Augustine's Confessions: "Magna vis est Memoriae, nescio quid horrendum, profunda, et infinita multiplicitas ; et hoc animus est, et hoc ego ipse sum." "Great is the force of Memory, a terrible, indescribable thing; profound and infinite multiplicity ; and this is the mind, and this I myself am" ; for what, indeed, is personality, identity, with-

out the binding chain of memory? Digby says in his Preface:

"The object of this poem was to visit, with the aid of St. Augustine, some of the wonders of Memory. There are added, autobiographical sketches comprising various remarkable characters, public events, artistic scenes, and even personal incidents connected with them, in which it was thought the general reader might take an interest."

This poem, so useful to those who wish to know Kenelm Digby as their friend, is, like the preceding *Ouranogaia* and the rest, written in rhyming couplets, mostly decasyllabic, but sometimes, for a change, octosyllabic or other, in a careless and rapid and artless way that recalls the later poems of George Crabbe; there are no high pretensions, but now and then, under influence of emotion, it becomes for a space really good poetry of the old fashion. Kenelm Digby would have made the answer which Crabbe made to Wordsworth when the latter wished him to spend more time in elaborating and polishing and condensing his verse: "It is not worth while." The easiest and most diffuse verse must yet by its more difficult nature be less diffuse than prose by the same author, and as he grew old Kenelm Digby may have found verse useful for this reason. He says that one can say in verse things which one cannot say so well in prose, because verse is the proper medium of the faculty of Imagination.

In the following year, 1876, Kenelm Digby, as indefatigable a writer to the extreme limits of life as his favourite Father, St. Augustine, or as Landor, published the last of all his thirty-eight volumes, entitled *Epilogue to Previous Works in Prose and Verse.* It was intended

to resume once more his Christian-Epicurean doctrine "de beatâ vitâ." He devotes the sixth canto of the *Epilogue* to the "use of authority in religion," as a source of happiness, and real freedom of mind, a subject to which he had given many admirable pages in the *Evenings on the Thames*, and, indeed, in all his works. If you accept Authority in religion, he says, you need not waste your reasoning power in the pursuit of that kind of knowledge which is not attainable by reasoning, nor will you be befooled by other men's (or women's) reasoning, but can attend serenely and with all your mind to the common matters of life, which do fall within the scope of reason and experience. The kind reader will, I am sure, forgive me for quoting a little more from the unambitious verse of an old man whose wisdom was, at least, based upon an immense study of the wise of all times, which, after all, leads one in the end to the philosophy of life always embraced by the unreasoning simple. These are the last citations I have to make, from the last book. Accept Authority in these matters, he says, and—

> "To common matters you can then attend,
> Of controversy you have found the end;
> But what can be more pleasant, or more wise
> Than so to rest where no one wins who tries?
> For 'tis the will, not knowledge, that's required
> When by this ancient Faith men are inspired.
> Only in part we know of all that's there;
> And to know more now none of us need care;
> What's wanted is an humble, full submission,
> And of the Faith that's prompted an admission;
> With which we can be free to leave the whole
> For future knowledge that awaits the soul."

By means of such living and central Authority, he adds, men can agree as one family having religion in

common. Even if some results of the Authority are, as he says, "rather queer," this gives ground for harmless and loving amusement, just as peculiar characteristics of a father or mother do in private families. He says of the Faith as embodied in the Catholic and Roman Church:

"Its unobtrusive force leaves you so free
That none besides seem blest with liberty.
Dear Heart! it is not a Procrustean bed,
Whate'er by foes, or silly friends, is said;
The very name denotes it is for all,
And not more for the great than for the small,
With adaptations infinite for each,
And more, perhaps, than 'twill expressly teach.
Although so varied in their tastes and views
Men find that it will serve them like the Muse,
Receiving with the mildest condescension
The homage e'en of thoughts they dare not mention;
So like a wise and tender mother still
Regarding less the action than the will,
Which, when it is in harmony with truth,
For all Faith cares may have its freaks in sooth.
Of utterances it makes no parade,
It seeks to work its purpose in the shade;
And one result of its great Presence there,
Of which, or soon or late, men are aware,
Is that it tends to happiness on earth,
And to serene and constant thoughts gives birth."

That true freedom comes from a reasoned and final submission to true and real Authority was the theme of Thomas Carlyle, although he never found the Authority. It was also one argument of a great cotemporary who did find it, the Dominican Lacordaire. Those who have been born and bred outside the Catholic Church and, led by Reason, acting through both heart and mind, submit to its authority, are aware of a singular and new sense of intellectual and moral freedom and emanci-

pation—to their surprise—for usually it is exactly that fear of loss of freedom which long holds back those whose hearts and minds are already convinced. Why this new sense of freedom? It is because he who has made the definite act of faith and surrender is saved from a multitude of opinions, and from imprisonment in the narrow bounds of his own mind and notions. Often, also, because he is saved from the yoke of sensual and other temptations which had held him in slavery. The service of God through the Church is perfect freedom. He stands, like Dante at the end of his journey through Purgatory, "libero, dritto, e di sano arbitrio."

The French historian, Michelet, remarks, "What were the Protestants, in substance? The transition from Christianity to the new birth of liberty, under a form still Christian." And what comes next after the realization in the last two centuries of this kind of liberty? Return, surely, to a higher order, securing higher freedom, and not now received merely because it exists, as by children, but accepted of deliberate choice, as an act of will, on its merits, as by grown men. The events of the sixteenth century were the manifestation of restless and vigorous adolescence. But without order there is no tranquillity, and without tranquillity there is no happiness. The great decisions of the Catholic Church, given at long intervals, have all been in the nature of judgments intended to determine long and bitter controversies, on subjects which can never be solved by controversy, and so to restore or extend the realm of peace. As the old Roman orator said: "Proprium est Romani hominis nemini servire." Catholics, indeed, serve and obey, but they do not follow and obey individual thinkers or prophets. A Catholic

accepts the decisions of the Church, from those of the Council of Nicea down to those, equally valid, of the Council of Trent and the Vatican Council, retaining freedom to discuss all undecided questions, and he is safe from being enslaved in mind by any Luther or Calvin, of some new species, perhaps feminine. Like the Imperial Government in India, the Church, in its own sphere, keeps the peace against intellectual and moral marauders.

Woman, says Digby in this same poem, in her normal state, agrees with the old Faith and is naturally Catholic, and she is the more powerfully beautiful if she really holds it, because she then has something, not elsewhere to be found, added to and deepening her natural charms; and, he adds, "that which can win unspoiled woman's heart, must be the true supreme good for all." Is not this the noblest homage that man can pay to woman?

Men, he says, to be fair, ought not to confound with the ways of her true sons and daughters the ways of fools or bad and worldly-ambitious men who may chance to belong nominally to the Catholic Church, nor ought they to judge the whole character of the Church through history by concentrating attention upon some particular age in which that character may have been perverted or relaxed in some degree, for a space.

After much else Kenelm Digby refers in this poem to those who accept all that is said in praise of the Catholic Church, but give to that name their own meaning, so that it has been necessary in modern England, since the Oxford Movement began, in writing about the Catholic Church, to introduce a guard on one's words, for fear of misinterpretation. He says, very gently, here:

"Methinks I hear the plaudits as we go
Of some consenting whom we love and know,
More natural e'en now they cannot be,
Nor good in common things that Faith can see.
But yet is there submission to display,
Like all religious grandeur passed away ?
Submission to the plans ordained on high
By Him who made and rules the earth and sky ?
To that great law, our highest thoughts beyond,
They'll find at length their minds will correspond."

So be it ! Till then, as Browning says :

"A little more, and how much it is,
A little less and what worlds away."

After the *Epilogue* Kenelm Digby published no more, though he lived for four years, and saw the fine edition in five volumes of the *Broadstone of Honour* which Mr. Quaritch, by his own desire, brought out in 1877. He must have turned over the pages of this work of his enthusiastic Cambridge youth with the sad and far-away feeling which he would have had in strolling once more, old and weary, through the spacious courts of Trinity and King's, or down those avenues of limes, and across the ancient bridges, or in gardens where the nightingale sings in May to fleeting generations. To read a book which one wrote long ago is to feel that it was written by some one like oneself, yet not oneself. "So sad, so strange, the days that are no more."

CHAPTER XI

CLOSE OF LIFE

" Ainsi toujours poussés vers de nouveaux rivages,
Dans la nuit éternelle emportés sans retour,
Ne pouvons nous jamais sur l'océan des âges
Jeter l'ancre un seul jour ? "

Lamartine.

Kenelm Digby's " public " had never been large, even in his earlier days, and no man who continues to write in old age can expect much appreciation from younger generations, bred in a new atmosphere of style and ideas. The *Mores Catholici* was his great work. The *Broadstone of Honour* was its prologue, the *Compitum* its epilogue. His later works were mostly received with silence. Reviewers deemed his poems to be beneath criticism, and, perhaps, from a technical point of view, they were not wrong. A pleasing volume might be condensed from the best of them, but they do not pretend to be works of art, and are mainly of interest from an autobiographical point of view. Besides, a man who writes to express his own convictions and not to voice current opinions must pay the price of independence. Digby was one of that valuable class of authors who supply the public with the kind of literature which it does not want. He was a little melancholy, all the same, when he looked back on his whole career as an author. In some verses, ironically called " The Pleasures of Author-

ship," in the volume of 1866, he humorously but sadly describes the experiences of an invariably unsuccessful author, the accumulating mass of unsold copies of previous works which must at last be destroyed to relieve the warehouse, the irresistible or inveterate passion or habit which makes him time after time rush into new publication, the embarrassed and unsuccessful attempts of friends to disguise or palliate the fact that they have not yet looked at the presentation copies, or have been fearfully bored by them, the heavy bills for bringing out books which publishers would not dream of printing at their own risk. Such are the troubles sometimes of incapacity to write well, but sometimes also of incapacity to adapt oneself to the taste and style and way of thinking, political or religious ideas, and particular sentimentality of the Age to which one nominally belongs. As Voltaire said, using "age" in the simpler sense, or, perhaps, in a double sense, in one of his own old-age poems :

> "Qui n'a pas l'esprit de son âge
> De son âge a tout le malheur."

It matters little, after all, and if a writer can deeply touch, or influence, a few people in his own time and after his death, he has done more than the author whose popular writings amuse thousands for a season or two, and are then straightway forgotten. Digby sometimes had the real pleasure of knowing that he had moved a heart. So, for instance, in August, 1875, when he was not far from eighty, he received this letter from Father T. E. Bridgett :

"Dear Sir,

"I must apologise for the delay in thanking you for your beautiful present. I was conducting the clergy

retreat of the diocese of Beverley at Ampleforth when the books arrived, and afterwards spent a day or two at Middleton Lodge in Yorkshire; and though I was told that a parcel had come I wished to have a glance at least at the books before thanking you for them.

"In those two beautiful spots—Ampleforth and Ilkley—which are probably familiar to you, I had most of the conditions which you enumerate for the enjoyment of 'serene hours': but for whatever I possess of the interior qualifications I am in no small measure your debtor. For brought up as I was in my boyhood in a Puritan atmosphere, and amid the incessant janglings of controversy, I have always looked on it as the most happy day in my life when in a bookseller's shop in Cambridge I took up the first volume of *Compitum*. The few pages I there read caused such a strange joy that I carried the book home, and soon made acquaintance with your previous writings. From you, my dear Sir, I learnt to know and love the Church; and now after five and twenty years of very intimate acquaintance with the modern workings of that Church whose ancient works you had taught me to admire, I feel that joy as fresh as ever though far more deep. I remember well how in 1850 I walked down the Strand wet with the water of my conditional baptism in the oratory of King William St. Pushing my way through that busy crowd I could have almost laughed in their faces that I was now in communion with those great and brave and holy men whom I had first learnt to love in the pages of *Compitum* and the *Broad Stone of Honour*.

"When after some years' absence from England I made acquaintance with your books of the second period (if I may so call them) I found that I could sympathise with your cheerful views about modern things no less than with your admiration and regrets of the old days.

"I make these remarks because I have just been reading your 'Pleasures of Authorship.' You tell of many disappointments; and though I have no doubt

that you have somewhat exaggerated the indifference of the public to your more recent works, yet I think you will be glad to know—what is better than a literary triumph—that you have been the means of giving joy and peace to one poor soul.

"In one of Byron's letters to Moore he writes, 'Heigho! I believe all the mischief I have ever done or sung, has been owing to that confounded book of yours' (viz. Little's poems); and I can say, my dear Mr. Digby, that if I have done any good in my missionary life in England and Ireland, though alas! it is too little, it is all owing to those delightful and holy books of yours.

"In the volume which you have sent me, *The Chapel of St. John*, I find your own writing, by which I see that you gave this copy 'on the 10th May 1861 to Mary Anne Letitia Digby.' If this is the same Letitia whom I find at p. 30 of the *Short Poems* mentioned among the dear ones departed, then I suppose that it is the very copy over whose pages a loving daughter must have shed many a tear while recalling the graces of her mother. But I think you must have sent me this copy by mistake; and if so, however much I should have prized it, I will hasten to restore it.

"Please let me know this; and in the meantime accept my grateful thanks and believe me,

"Yours most sincerely,

"T. E. Bridgett, C.N.R."

During the last fifteen years of his life, after his youngest daughter, Mary, had married, and lived at Shaftesbury House with her husband and children, Kenelm Digby stayed almost entirely in London. Almost every year, however, while the rest were away on autumn holidays, he went for a few weeks to Paris, and to stay with the Count d'Esgrigny at Pouliguen, and the Marquis de Montaigu at La Bretesche, both in West Brittany. La Bretesche is a grand old feudal

castle with moat, portcullised gate, towers and ramparts. He did not care for the life of English country houses, and rarely went to any, except, while his old friend Ambrose Phillips de Lisle still lived, to his charming homes at Garendon and Grace-Dieu in Leicestershire. He thought that de Lisle was the best type of an English country gentleman. A true Aristocracy, he says in *Evenings on the Thames*, is the strength of a country,

"as can be witnessed now, to quote but one instance, at Gracedieu and at Garendon. It may be, as there, the education of the country's youth, the civilizing of its manners, the diffusion of enjoyment by throwing open green glades and inviting paths to its juvenile population, a source of patriotic heroism of the right stamp, by its own domestic examples; it may be, even, as there, the direction of all to the final end of man, the propagation of the true faith, the extension of order, comfort, and temporal happiness through the masses, and, what is no doubt mysterious, though we might say incontestable, their guidance and that of generations yet unborn, to everlasting happiness. Such is the work of a Christian Aristocracy, the natural and supernatural results of a vast territorial property in the right hands."

Digby often went to concerts on Saturdays, and sometimes to good plays. As to churches, he was much attached to the Dominican Church on Haverstock Hill, also to the little old French Chapel in King Street, Portman Square, and often attended the Carmelite Church in Kensington, on Campden Hill, and the then small parish chapel of Kensington.

He passed all his days, while indoors, in writing, reading, and painting. He rose very early, and was engaged long hours in these occupations. A little

before dinner he would come into the drawing-room and have some music, if possible, and he liked also to have music after dinner. He never was tired of hearing music, and his daughter, Mrs. Dormer, would play to him in the evening till she was too tired to play more. He devoted to music a canto of his *Ouranogaia, or Heaven on Earth* poem. The following few stanzas show his thought concisely:

"The charm of music lies not in its sound,
As if in its reception by the ear;
But deep within the human heart 'tis found
Revealed, when thus its melodies we hear.
Thence, not from strings or wind it draws those tones,
Which the moved soul so acted upon owns.

There is the wondrous magic of its power,
When, instantly descending thus below,
It draws from hearts, as from a mystic bower,
What causes thought, and joy, or tears to flow,
What would without it ever dormant lie
In these strange depths of our humanity.

But what is drawn thus, whether grave or gay,
Belongs unto the wings with which we soar,
Comes not from earth, though in our hearts it lay,
But tells of what we lost in days of yore,
Of what we may more fully here regain
Whether to dance or mourn should prompt the strain.

Yea, tells it too of what we have regained,
The moment that we catch the potent sound;
For joy, however short, is there maintained,
Such bliss as re-unites this mortal ground
With that mysterious and transcendent whole
For which, we feel, was made and tuned the soul.

Superfluous does Music seem to be;
All other gifts on earth will serve mankind;
Yet this, of noble inutility,
Can the most deeply move the human mind,
For here, the more it seems without an end,
The more to boundless good it seems to tend."

Kensington Gardens and even Hyde Park were in the 'sixties and 'seventies far more rural and less densely populated than they are now, though even now, at the right days and hours, they are a fair refuge from thoughts and sights of town. Here Kenelm Digby often sat, or lay on the grass, or paced the long avenues. He liked also suburban commons like Barnes or Hampstead, where he could see young lovers or playing children. He sometimes gazed across Middlesex and Hertfordshire from the "Spaniards" garden at Hampstead, or watched the noble landscape from Richmond Hill, with his beloved Thames gliding down towards him in the midst. These scenes replaced for him the gardens of Paris, or the wooded heights of St. Germain, or St. Cloud above the Seine, so dear to his younger days.

Digby did not belong to any club and cared little to dine out, but he liked to have friends to dine at his house. His memory and knowledge made him a good talker and narrator of stories. He disliked critical discussion of the characters of living persons, or mere gossip. "Why talk personalities, when there are such infinitely better topics for conversation?" he used to say.

One of his chief friends in London was Mrs. George Marlay, the lady whom he had known in his boyhood, as a bright vision of a child, at the castle of Lord Charleville in Ireland. Her house, St. Catherine's Lodge, Regent's Park, was a social centre, and garden parties there in the summer were renowned and select. Mrs. Marlay, now a widow, was the hostess, as her son, Mr. Charles Brinsley Marlay, never married. She was a "grande dame" of the old school, and lived to a great age. She was Digby's best adviser about his domestic and other affairs.

Digby's own ideas were always rather those of the "grand seigneur," although in his dress and regard for small appearances he was a little careless, and his tastes were simple. He liked to keep horses, and provided his daughter, Mrs. Dormer, with a stately carriage and pair. She wished to change this equipage for a brougham drawn by a single good horse. Her father resisted for some time this decline in standard, but at last yielded, saying, "Now, my dear, you will look like a doctor's wife using his professional brougham when he does not want it."

I owe the following recollections to Kenelm Digby's eldest granddaughter, Miss G. Dormer, who was a child of thirteen when he died.

"There are in my memory of childhood's days few pictures so vivid as one or two that centre round my grandfather Kenelm Digby. I see him at his easel painting hard, early and late. When we children cascaded downstairs in the morning and gathered round to see what he was doing, he had as usual been at work since soon after six, or half-past, and the large dining-room, half his studio and sitting-room, had rows of pictures either waiting to be finished, or ready to be sent away to the churches and convents for which they had been painted. I believe most of the poor Catholic churches and chapels in Great Britain had gifts from him. He had in earlier days met with encouragement for his painting. His landscapes and the copies of religious pictures from many a gallery hung, mostly unframed, close together, covering the walls of Shaftesbury House.

"Still more clearly do I remember in the long evenings, when he could no longer paint, or read, how sad and lonely he seemed as he sat in his armchair near the green reading-lamp. Sometimes he wrote, or seemed to be correcting, pages that were very closely

written over; they were his last Poems I think. The pages were bound in a green book, but they fell down like a map in folds from their bulging covers. I used to wonder how he could ever fold them back again. My mother would send me in to keep him company, if she could not go herself in that children's hour when we came down from our lessons after tea. He would sometimes go into the drawing-room to hear her sing to us. He loved her singing. But whether he was writing or just sitting still, with that look of profound melancholy; shading his eyes from the light with his hand that had such long fingers, the impression he gave was always one of activity and life. His was not a passive old age. His step was light, and he was slender and very tall, erect, his head with long, rather thin, white hair, stooped very little. He never used a stick, my father told me, till the last year or two of his life. He would go for long walks nearly every day, often to see old friends, such as Mr. Brinsley Marlay, and his sister Lady John Manners.[1] I remember Mr. Brinsley Marlay, a picturesque figure in high stock and with fobs on his chain, coming fairly often to Shaftesbury House. Also old Mr. Herbert, who painted the frescoes in the House of Lords, and Mr. Shadwell, in skull-cap, bringing us children 'lollipops' in a little black silk bag. John Cashel-Hoey[2] and his literary wife he also often went to see. Cardinal Manning I remember several times at Shaftesbury House. My grandfather retired to rest early, but he loved having little dinner-parties, and was the life and soul of them. I have been told he was full of good stories and humour. He was always a very early riser, and at one time he used to swim every morning in the Serpentine, breaking the ice in winter to do so. He had dived in off the bridge. I suppose this must have been when he first came to live at Shaftesbury House in 1857. In those days there

[1] Mother of the present Duke of Rutland.

[2] Editor of the *Dublin Review* about 1846.

was still the toll-gate in Kensington and market-gardens between there and Brompton.

"The gardens at Shaftesbury House covered between five and six acres. They ended in a meadow and an orchard, where we children ran wild, and before our day, my mother had driven her team of goats and small coach round it, and my uncle Kenelm used to keep himself in training. I just remember seeing him tramp round the garden to get in so many miles exercise. This uncle used to drive his four-in-hand down to Shaftesbury House sometimes before he and his family went to live in the country. He was a great sportsman and a good boxer; which was lucky, as during an election in Ireland when he would not stand for Home Rule, he was attacked by the crowd. He challenged them all to come on singly but they refused.

"An old master-builder and carpenter, Mr. Hussey, still living, told me that when working at Shaftesbury House he often saw Mr. Digby writing by the hour in the garden. He had an ink-pot that fastened on to his waistcoat somehow, and he would drag some old log into the shade, to sit on, or an overturned flower-pot. My grandmother he rarely saw, as her mother Mrs. Dillon, 'a very witty and imperious old lady,' ordered everything. But once when he was working outside a room, Mrs. Digby called him in, and laughing, showed him some empty shelves. She had discovered, said old Mr. Hussey, that Mr. Digby had not a shirt left! He had just confessed that he had given them all away to the poor on his way to mass in the mornings. Mr. Hussey, when I questioned him about those days, kept referring to the characteristic that struck him most about Mr. Digby: his holiness. 'He was a saint, and he was so humble. I remember seeing him often kneel in the porch all through mass sooner than disturb the congregation if he came in a bit late. And he was the very soul of honour. If it was for Mr. Digby you were working, . . . no need to look out! Your interests were

quite safe with him. He was fine to look at too!' Canon Fanning said the same, 'he was so holy.' Just two or three years before my grandfather died, Canon Fanning had come to the Pro-Cathedral as a young priest. He had heard much of Kenelm Digby, and he remembered how deeply impressed he was the first time he saw him. It was on a Maundy Thursday at communion. Canon Fanning told me that in a crowd you could not help noticing Digby. 'He was so noble a figure, he looked the very embodiment of one of his own knights. If a poet, if Tennyson, had seen him, he would have written an ode to him!' exclaimed the Canon. 'To read his books is like reading one of the Fathers of the Desert. They are redolent of the piety and spirit of the Middle Ages.'

"These two eye-witnesses of Kenelm Digby's last years gave their tributes with glowing enthusiasm. My grandfather would be teased sometimes by our rampagious spirits. There were eight of us when he died. He was particular about our English, and disliked, I remember, for instance, the indiscriminate use of the adjective 'big.' An ugly Americanism, he called it. He was the gentlest and most unexacting of grandfathers.

"I only remember his being angry with us once, when he had caught us in his precious library upstairs clambering up the over-crowded book-shelves to the ceiling. We had let him in for a lively visit once from Mr. Walter Severn, who told me about it in after years. He had been pelted from behind the high wall of Shaftesbury House. Most indignantly he rang the bell and insisted on seeing the owner of the house. Grandpapa received him most courteously, and when he insisted on having the servants in to find out who the culprit was, beyond assuring him that none of the servants would be guilty of such discourtesy, he said nothing about us. Only when Mr. Severn got home and told Ruskin of his adventure, Ruskin laughed and said,

'Oh, that is my old friend Kenelm Digby,' and Mr. Severn learnt about the other denizens of Shaftesbury House! It was on the strength of this old friendship that I had the privilege of visiting Mr. Ruskin when I was at Coniston, a year or two before he died. Mr. Coventry Patmore, the Catholic poet, spoke to me of his admiration for Kenelm Digby, and impressed on me the duty of living up to being his grandchild. He urged so earnestly that young Catholic women should use their influence on all around them for good, that I have never forgotten that visit he paid me in the Isle of Wight.

"Often, when visiting some monastery abroad, the mention of Kenelm Digby's name would win the friendliest of welcomes. At the Benedictine monastery of Subiaco near Rome, the monks told me that he stayed in the monastery some time to read in their library. My mother has had letters from strangers who wrote to express their gratitude and devotion to his books. Amongst them, I remember one from a distinguished professor of literature who wished to write about him; and one from a clergyman, who wrote her the story of a strange coincidence. When his father read the *Broadstone of Honour*, in his enthusiasm he had resolved that if ever he married and had a son, that son should be called Kenelm. This resolve was also made independently by his future wife; and so their son was christened after the author whom they loved. He it was who wrote. Every summer my grandfather went to his beloved France, to Le Pouliguen to stay with his friends, when we all went to the sea. I have a letter written to me about a year before he died, from London. He writes: 'Here it does nothing but rain and you want me to start for a holiday! Not if I know it! So Sunday is your birthday. Well, that fact proves that I have been in London as late as this in August, for I was painting my pine-forest here when you came into this world of ours. I feel it is

very dull just now, but I have begun a large Picture for Belmont Abbey in Hertfordshire.' So his pictures indeed companioned his old age. He was over eighty years then. The day he was taken ill he was at his easel painting for some poor church. I remember the call for help, the haemorrhage that could not be stopped. Then they put him to bed in the room downstairs, that had been the chapel in my great-grandmother's life-time when the chaplain, the Abbé Bontier, lived in the house and had said daily mass there. The Blessed Sacrament had been kept in that chapel room where he died.[1]

"He appealed strongly to my childish sympathy that instinctively had recognised the lonely aloofness of this life among us, that looked back so far, and that was passing on into the dimness . . . beyond. I used to watch and try to distract him.

"When I read his books, I recognise him in them. Children apprehend more than they can realise at the time, and the after years unfold meanings and memories. Mr. Holland has wondered that the subject of his memoir has not been more mentioned amongst the records of the men of letters of his day, many of whom he certainly knew and prized, and was by them prized. But is not holiness and piety, and 'other-worldliness,' often accompanied by the gift of elusiveness, as if even the admiration and enjoyment of the noblest men and women were shielded off? Then, as no light is to remain hid under a bushel, does it not seem truly provided for and deliberately brought about that a kindred spirit should eventually make for it a beautiful candlestick, and the light that seemed to burn so low and uncared for, should suddenly rekindle when the right torchbearer comes along. Thus now, may it be!"

[1] My father, who collected and pasted into a book the letters and many Press notices about him, was much distressed when it was lost in the upheaval of our moving, alas! into another London house,—without a garden.

The year 1879 was the last complete year of Kenelm Digby's long life. He had for some months grown visibly weaker, but he went in the autumn once more to his beloved France, to the Breton château of the d'Esgrignys.

On the 13th March, 1880, Kenelm Digby was visiting a lady, an old and constant friend, who lived in Seymour Street, Portman Square. He seemed to her very feeble and depressed, and said, "All my friends are gone." She said, "Oh! they will come back." "That," he replied, with a smile, "is hardly to be wished, as they are all in Kensal Green, and the best thing I can do is to follow them." She said that he ought to be buried at Ramsgate, but he shook his head, and said that it must be Kensal Green. He had always had a liking for this cemetery, and had made it the subject of one of his poems, called "All Souls' Day." About the same time he wrote a long letter to the Marquis de Montaigu, sad in tone, but saying nothing as to his health. It must have been about this time also that he received that last tender and beautiful letter from his long-lost Marcella, if indeed it came before his death.

A day or two later he fell ill, and died on the 22nd March, 1880. He was buried, as he had desired, in the cemetery of St. Mary, at Kensal Green, where so many Catholics lie, some of them old friends of his own. A lime-tree shadows his grave. The tomb is a very simple one, and the inscription runs:

In Memory of Kenelm Henry Digby
Who died 22nd March 1880

R.I.P.

This Cross is erected by
his loving daughter.

Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, wrote on the 24th March to Mrs. Dormer :

" What would you wish for your dear Father better or more beyond this, to fall asleep without pain after a life of preparation ? As your husband said, he who has converted so many to God, and has led so many up the hill of a holy life is surely with his Master. May God bless and console you and all dear to you."

The Comte d'Esgrigny wrote from Paris on 25th March, 1880, to Mr. Hubert Dormer, Digby's son-in-law :

" La douloureuse nouvelle que vous me donnez me revient aujourd'hui de Pouliguen. Elle me frappe au cœur. Le voilà donc disparu ce vieux compagnon de toute ma vie ; nul n'a été plus fidèlement aimé, et nul ne m'a été plus fidèle. 'Moi qui ai tant aimé mes amis,' m'écrivait il dans sa dernière lettre. J'éprouve un amer chagrin de m'avoir pu serrer une fois encore cette main toujours tendue, ainsi qu'il me témoignait le desir depuis plusieurs mois. Quelle âme d'élite était la sienne, douce entre toutes, affectueuse, élevée, dévouée, l'une des plus simplement belles et nobles que j'ai rencontrées ici-bas. Sa chère Mary doit savoir combien je la plains, combien je m'unis à elle dans cette cruelle épreuve. Pauvre Mary, quel déchirement pour elle, et pour vous aussi mon cher Hubert, la perte est bien grande. Digby vous aimait ; il vous appréciait ; il ne parlait de vous qu'avec une véritable affection et une parfaite estime ; toujours je l'ai entendu se louer de vos procédés à son égard ; cette pensée doit mêler quelque douceur à vos regrets. Quant à moi je vous garderai un sentiment de gratitude pour toutes les satisfactions que vous a dues mon vieil ami.

" Je vous remercie des détails que vous m'avez donnés. Digby avait été si doux à la vie qu'il méritait bien que la mort lui fût douce. C'était d'ailleurs un Chrétien toujours pret, et je ne doute pas que Dieu ne l'ait reçu

paternellement et comme un de ses enfants le plus fidèle.

" Jeanne a vivement ressenti le coup qui vous frappe. Raoul en a été très affecté aussi. Comment ne pas aimer Digby dès qu'on le connaissait ?"

The Marquis de Montaigu wrote to Mr. Dormer :

" On ne pouvait connaître Digby sans l'estimer, et l'aimer fidèlement. Tout en lui inspirait une confiance que d'autres n'acquérent qu'avec le temps. On se sentait en présence d'une âme si simple, si noble, si exempte des misérables petitesses de l'humanité, qu'on était attiré sans résistance. Il fallait se livrer à l'affection qu'inspirent les saints ; on se sentait appuyé, protegé, comme dans un port, sous l'influence de cette âme grande comme celles que Dieu forme et prépare pour le gloire du ciel. A cela se joignait une candeur d'enfant, un esprit des plus fins, une instruction profonde, une haute intelligence, et l'originalité de son caractère, si bienveillant toujours, c'était un charme de plus. Mes regrets se mélent à vos regrets, mes espérances à vos espérances ; notre cher ami est heureux : Dieu l'a préparé par bien des épreuves et l'appelé à l'heure ou la récompense immédiate pouvait lui être accordée. Son souvenir est pour moi chose sacrée. Je prie avec vous, car nous devons toujours prier, et l'affection que je portais à votre beau-père revient naturellement à vous et à sa chère fille qu'il aimait."

Little public notice was taken of Kenelm Digby's death. The *Times* devoted barely ten lines to his obituary. The newspapers, at the moment, were absorbed in the electoral campaign which ended in the overthrow of Lord Beaconsfield, almost the exact cotemporary of Digby, the man who in his early days had played with the ideas which to Digby were sacred. Liberalism, in all spheres, had almost obliterated with

its utilitarian spirit the chivalrous and romantic movement, and, in its turn, declining rapidly after its culmination, is giving way to Social Democracy. But neither will this, by itself, satisfy the deepest needs and aspirations of men. Content and social peace, so far as they can be found at all in this world by the "exiled sons of Eve," will nowhere be found save in that Catholic religion in its fullest inner spirit and outward form, to whose defence Kenelm Digby devoted his life.

To the individual soul the Catholic Church is not in itself the final end or place of repose, although it is an immense guidance, protection and assistance. *Fecisti nos ad te, Domine, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.* The Church is the true highway that leads us to our country. Other paths to the far end may be found by chosen souls, but this central road through life and death is best for the ordinary wayfarer. This is the argument and theme of all that Kenelm Digby wrote, from the *Broadstone of Honour* of his youth to the latest poem of his old age.

Requiescat in pace.

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